

WIN CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW'S INDIAN HEADDRESS !!!

November 1979
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PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED



THE TRUE STORY OF BRUNO SAMMARTINO

by CAPT. LOU ALBANO



**FLAIR & STEAMBOAT:
WILL THIS TAG TEAM END
IN DISASTER?**



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KING'S COURT

By Peter King

YOUR NAME IS Nick Bockwinkel. You wear a belt of gold around your waist. It tells everyone you are the ruler of a kingdom called the American Wrestling Association.

Others want your throne.

They must be repulsed. They must be vanquished. Yet new challengers, new assaults, new battles appear as soon as the old ones are finished.

It hurts you, Nick Bockwinkel, it hurts you badly,



Nick Bockwinkel is exhausted after a grueling title defense. Although he's been AWA king for three years, many fans have never accepted him as champion.

when you say you're not as good as Gagne, the man who was king before you. The man you had to defeat to win your belt of gold.

It kills you inside that they still call Gagne "Champ." Nick Bockwinkel they call lucky.

So many times you've tried to show them you are a champion. So many times you have begun a match by wrestling scientifically. But then, the pressure starts to build. Your opponent is still standing, fighting, clawing. You feel your championship, your world, slipping away. Then, there are no more rules for Nick Bockwinkel. You must win. Any way you can.

You leave the ring and you hear the boos. Sometimes you ignore them. Other times your anger forces you to scream back at the crowd. But your words are lost in a crescendo of jeers.

It doesn't bother me, you think. Let them boo, you say. They pay their dough. I'm the champion. I know I'm the best.

You touch the belt. Like a blind man reading braille, the raised letters which say "World Champion" are transmitted from your fingertips to your brain. You place the belt against your forehead. The cool metal feels good against your overheated brow. Thoughts of pain and torment are soothed away. You won tonight. You are still the champion. But suddenly, like an explosion in your mind, you remember how you won. You throw the belt against the wall.

Your name is Nick Bockwinkel. And even in victory, there is no triumph. □

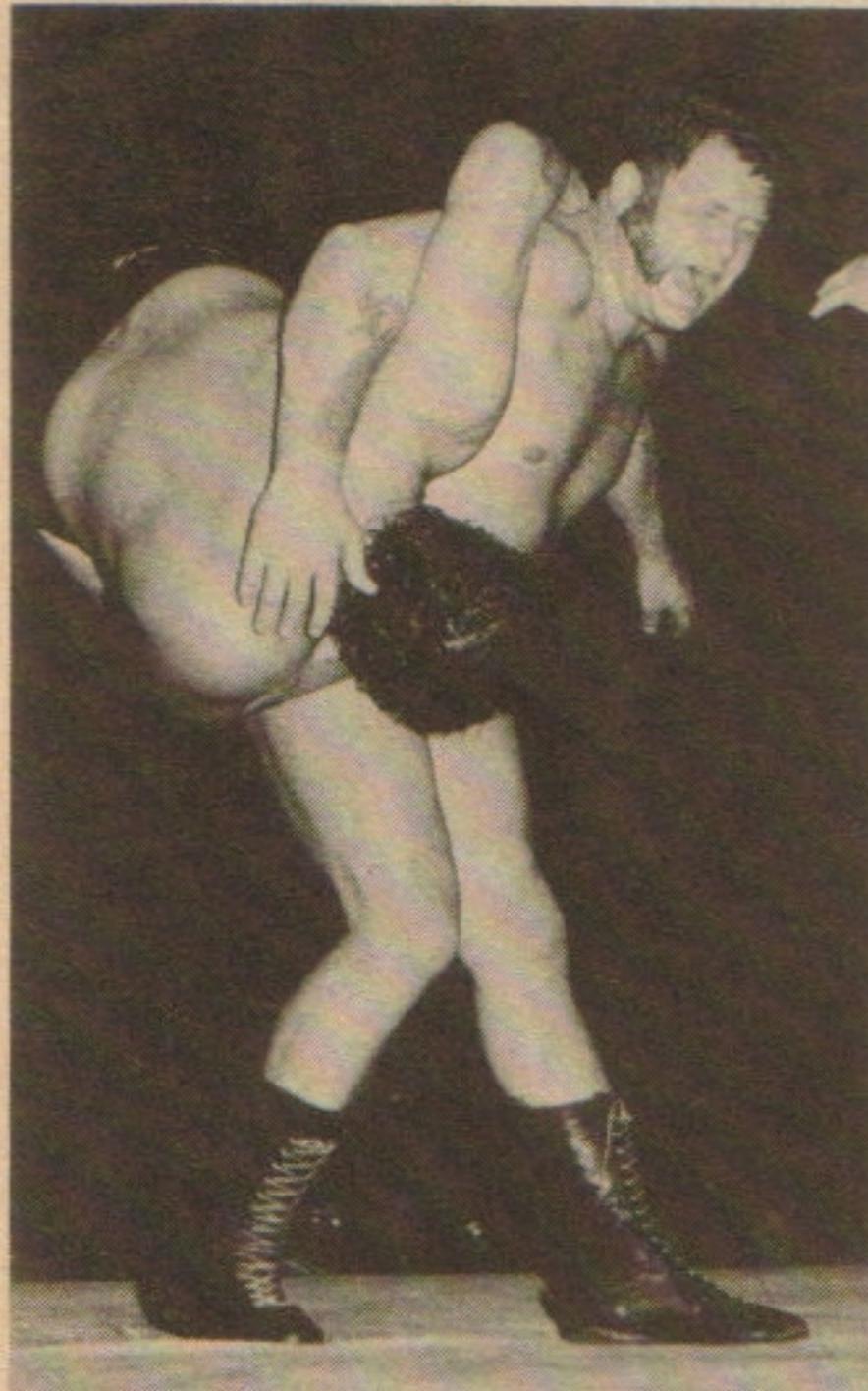
A—ON—ASSIGNMENT

BY STEVEN FARHOOD

MIAMI IS A strange town. As I got off the plane, the heat hit me like a lead pipe. It is heavy and blunt. But 45 minutes later, it was raining. Ah, give me Brooklyn any day.

Anyway, I came down here to see Harley Race. But when I checked into his hotel, all I saw were old people. And that smelly suntan oil. Phew! Florida may be great in the winter, but it's a burning inferno in August.

Harley looked well. He remembered me from the night I covered his title match against Wahoo McDaniel. It was my first story. I was highly critical of the NWA champ. But I was relieved to find that he never held a grudge with journalists.



NWA champion Harley Race battles Wahoo McDaniel (above). This was the first match Steve Farhood covered.

"If I got mad every time you writers said something negative about me, I'd be walking the streets beating up lampposts," he said with a chuckle. "I've been called everything from washed up to overrated to never was. It stopped bothering me a long time ago."

We slowly walked to the beach. Two elderly women with

the challenger when Race defends his title? While Race may not be number one in popularity, I quickly realized that one simple word describes the response he draws. The word is respect.

Harley slowly scribbled his name on a pair of dollar bills. The women giggled and scurried along, their dark faces



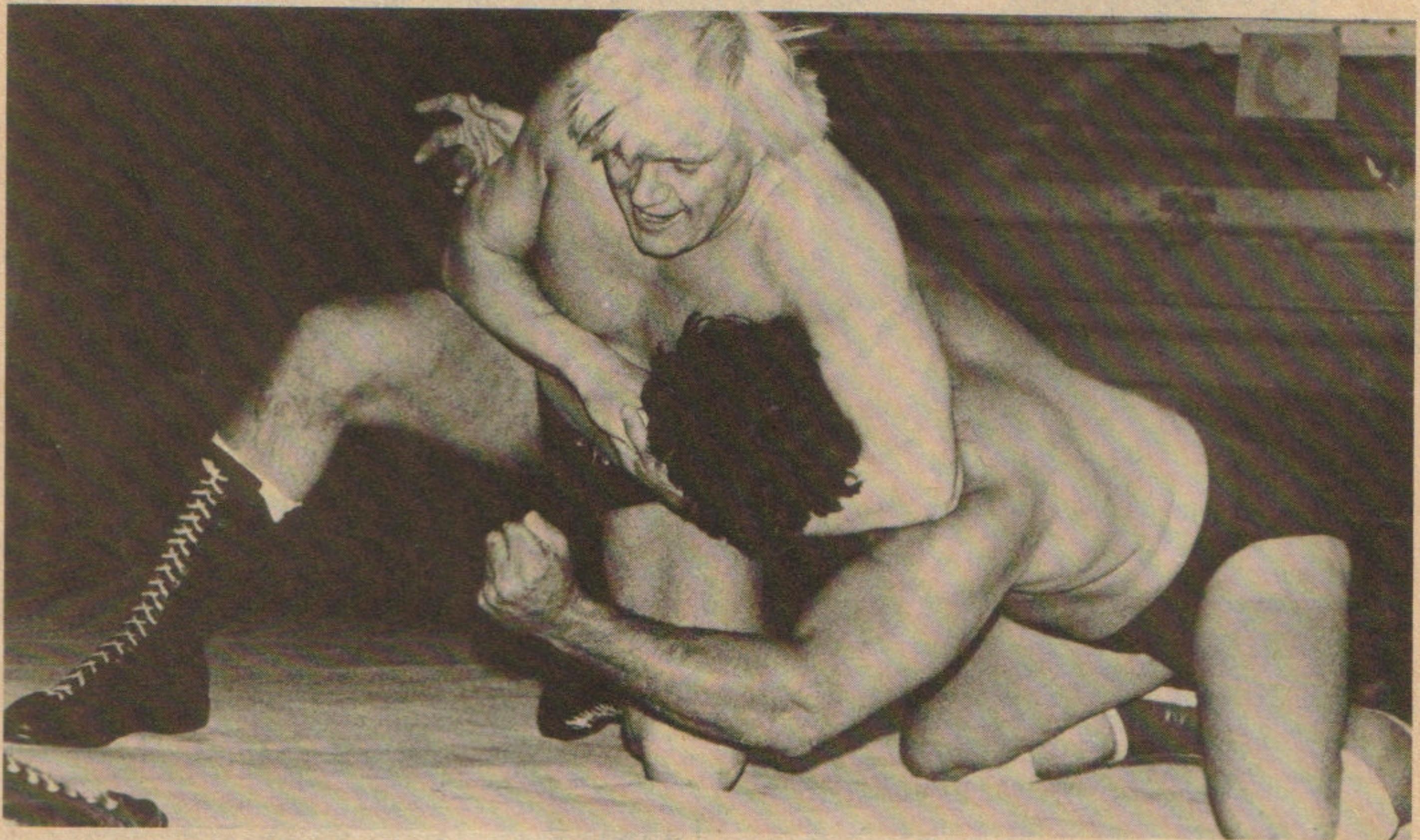
Race poses with popular movie star Sylvester Stallone. Like Stallone, Race realizes that a celebrity often struggles for privacy. Race enjoys the solitude of the beach. He finds the sand and water relaxing.

grey hair and deep-lined wrinkles stopped us. They wanted Harley's autograph. For some strange reason, this surprised me. After all, wasn't Race considered a rulebreaker? Don't the fans always root for

looking like raisins in the sun. Harley and I continued toward the beach. We opened a large blanket, stripped to our bathing suits and turned on the radio.

(Continued on page 46)

DRESSING CONFESSIONAL CONDOM



A FAN ALERTED us to a shocking incident. It occurred during the recent North American heavyweight title match between then champion Ted DiBiase and Pat Patterson. While the grapplers were tangled in the corner, this fan, who will remain anonymous for obvious reasons, got a picture of Patterson pulling a shiny object from his trunks. Upon close examination, it was apparent it was a set of

brass knuckles.

With cunning accuracy, Patterson pummeled DiBiase with the brass knuckles. A clear violation of the rules. Indeed, it was a vulgar flaunting of the sacred laws of wrestling.

Thus, Patterson was able to swipe the belt from Ted DiBiase. It wasn't a fair contest of strength against strength, speed against speed, cunning against cunning. It was a disgusting

Pat Patterson won Ted DiBiase's North American title by using illegal brass knuckles.

spectacle of rulebreaking which occurs all too frequently in this sport.

Unfortunately, it's too late to do anything. Review of the films is a pointless process, often resulting in little change. However, we do urge fans to continue their vigilance as best they can.

(Continued on page 49)

RINGSIDE

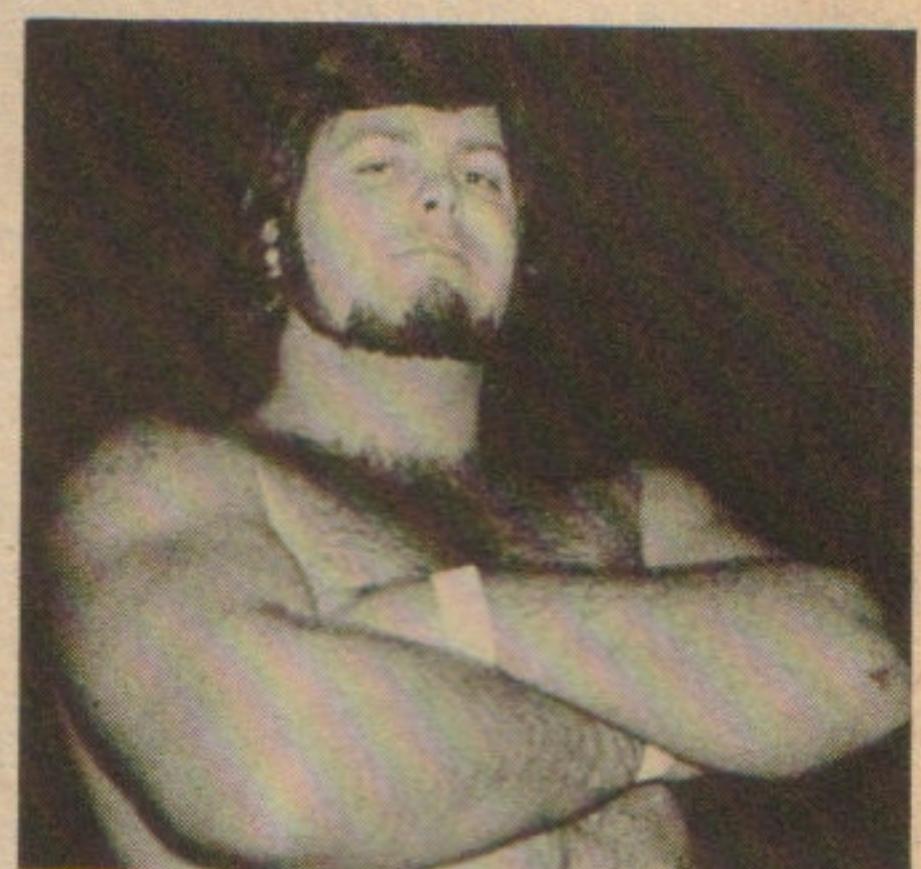
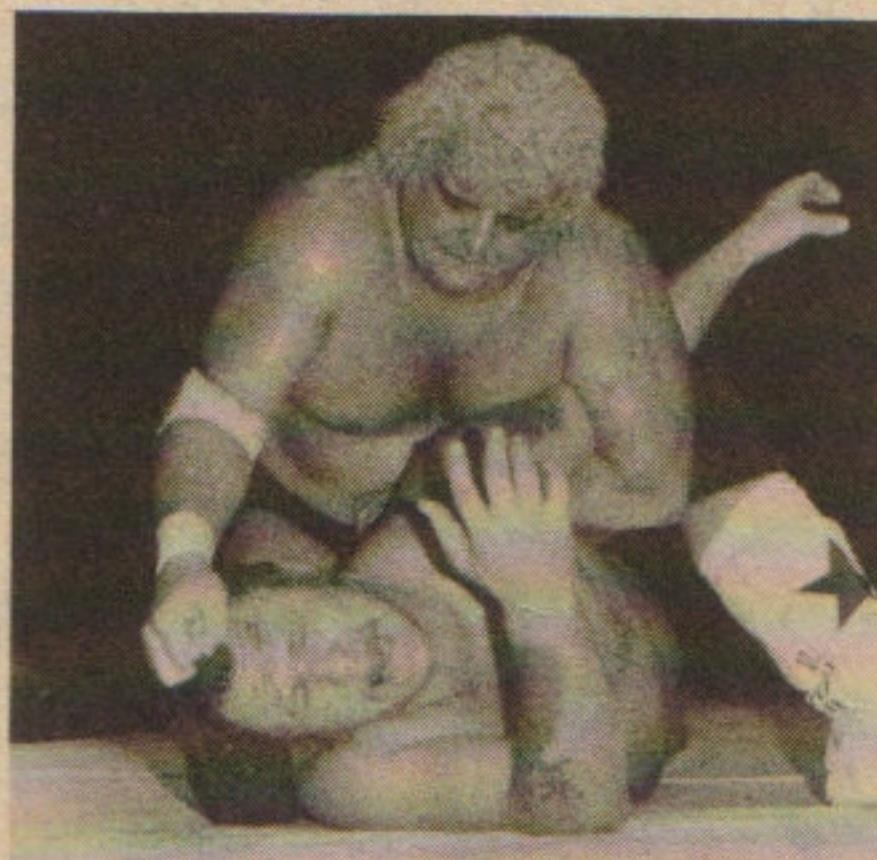
With Bill Apter

I KNOW YOU won't believe it: Dusty Rhodes says he is through wrestling NWA champion Harley Race—at least for the time being. "I have got to quit goin' after Harley. I'll come up with some new strategies before I rassle him again." Dusty spoke in an exclusive interview with the editorial staff of PWI. "Harley is too used to rasslin' me. He can almost anticipate what I'm gonna do next. It's back to the drawing board for the Dream!"

The wrestling community is still shocked at the sudden death of Chris Taylor. The man will be missed . . . Fred Blassie's protege Nikolai Volkoff became irate at questions commentator Bruno Sammartino asked him on the "Championship Wrestling" television show from Pennsylvania, and he attacked Bruno. The two-time WWF champion was massacred during the unsuspected attack. Bruno vows, "That creep will pay with his blood!"

AWA champion Nick Bockwinkel had another confrontation with the unpredictable Mad Dog Vachon. Nick was rendered a bloody mess in their wild meeting, and retained his title when the Mad Dog was disqualified . . . Sweet Brown Sugar got some lumps in his match against King Curtis, but the masked youngster didn't lose this one. Curtis fled from the ring after he couldn't absorb any more of Sugar's slick flying maneuvers.

As mean as ever, "Big Cat" Ernie Ladd is stomping out all competition in the Mid-Atlantic

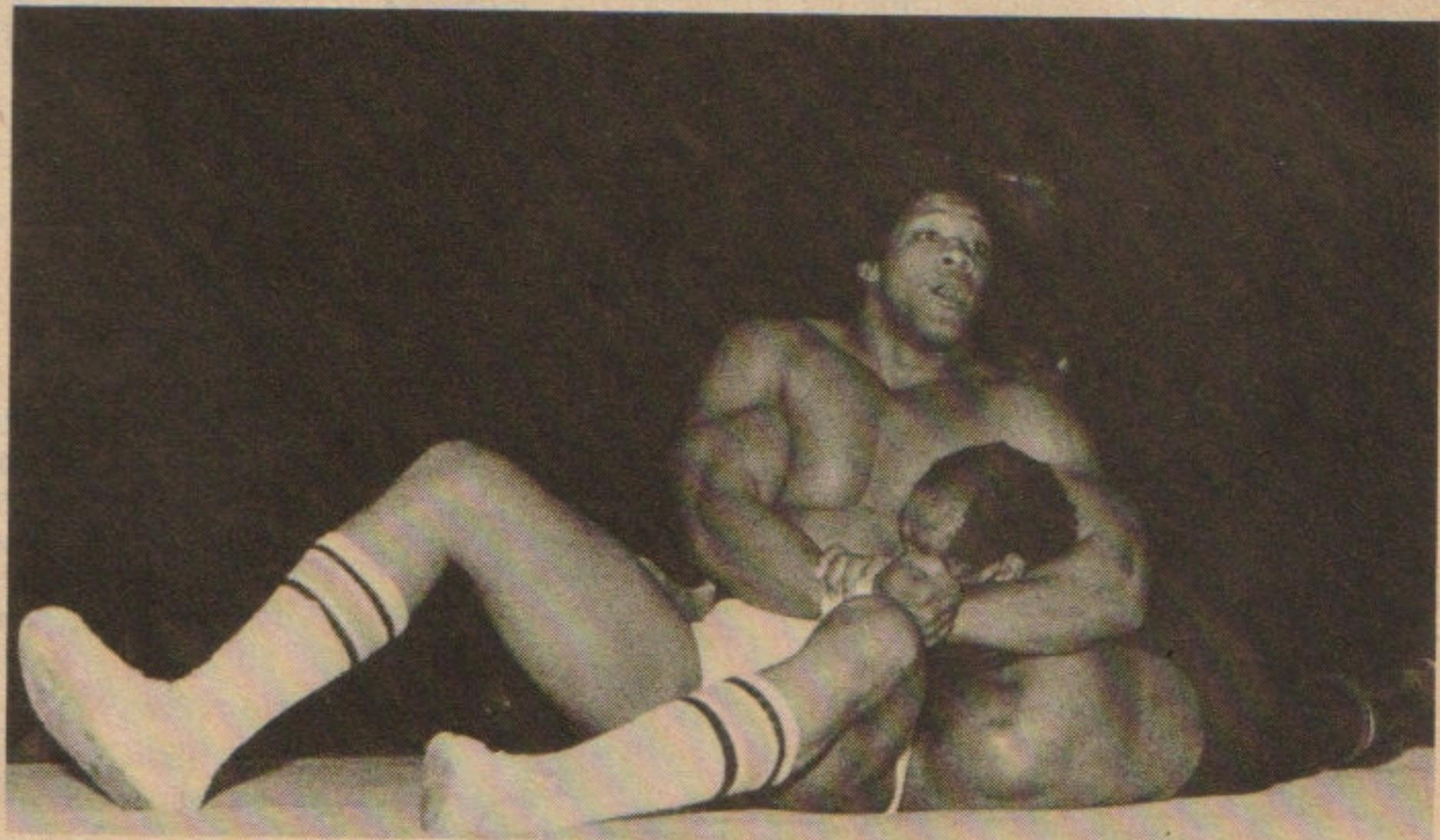


Above left: Dusty Rhodes in action against NWA champion Harley Race. Has Rhodes wrestled Race for the last time? Above right: Jerry Lawler, along with partner Bill Dundee, is at war against the Blond Bombers.

region . . . Tony Atlas is a new and very welcome face in the WWF. Tony has been trying to sign matches in the area for quite some time, and his dream has finally come true. Good luck Tony! . . . Also now in WWF, from the Mid-Atlantic area, is big Swede Hanson. Fred Blassie has purchased Hanson's contract.

Jerry Lawler and tag team partner Bill Dundee are at war against the team who call themselves "The Blond Bombers" . . . Dusty Rhodes and Bill Watts are a hot tag team in New Orleans . . . Who will dethrone the Valiant Brothers, Johnny and Jerry, from their WWF tag team perch? . . . Paul

(Continued on page 51)



Above: Tony Atlas has impressed WWF fans with his scientific wrestling. He combines aerial maneuvers and strength as well as anyone.

If you wish to contribute to Shocket's mailbag, send your letters to:

TOP ROPE
Box 48
Rockville Centre, N.Y.
11571

OFF THE ROPE

By Dan Shocket

BEFORE I ANSWER any mail, I'd like to thank many of you for the overwhelming number of letters sent to this column. It's gratifying to discover there are numerous fans who realize the men slandered as rulebreakers are actually the best wrestlers around. Of course, the majority still believes stumblebums like Verne Gagne, Ivan Putski and Chief Jay Strongbow are actually athletes. Can't win 'em all.

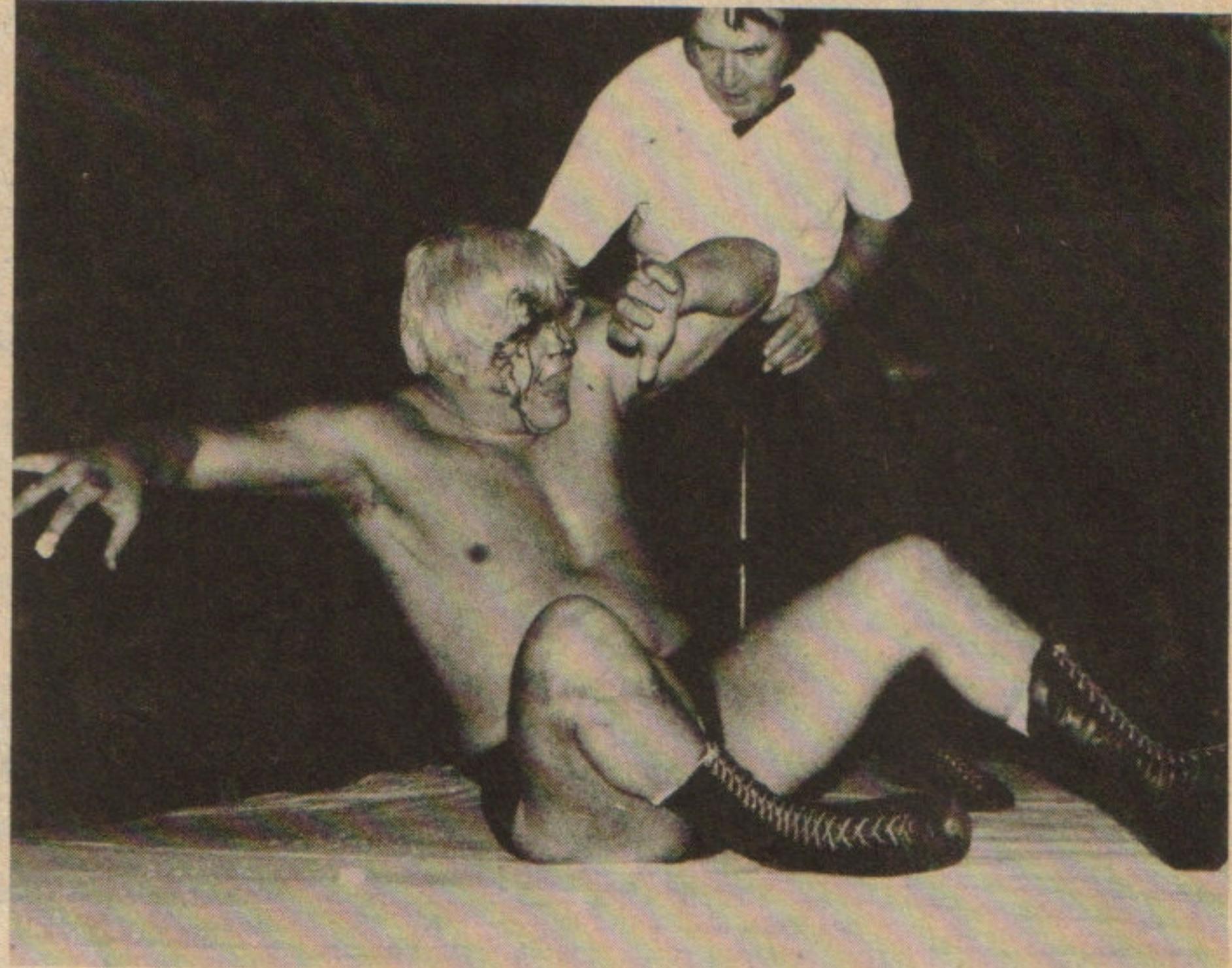
Dear Dan,

I would like to know why you try to protect rulebreakers. Pat Patterson wrestled a great wrestler, Ted DiBiase, for the North American title. Patterson relied on a pair of brass knuckles to knock out DiBiase. Now, you call that wrestling?

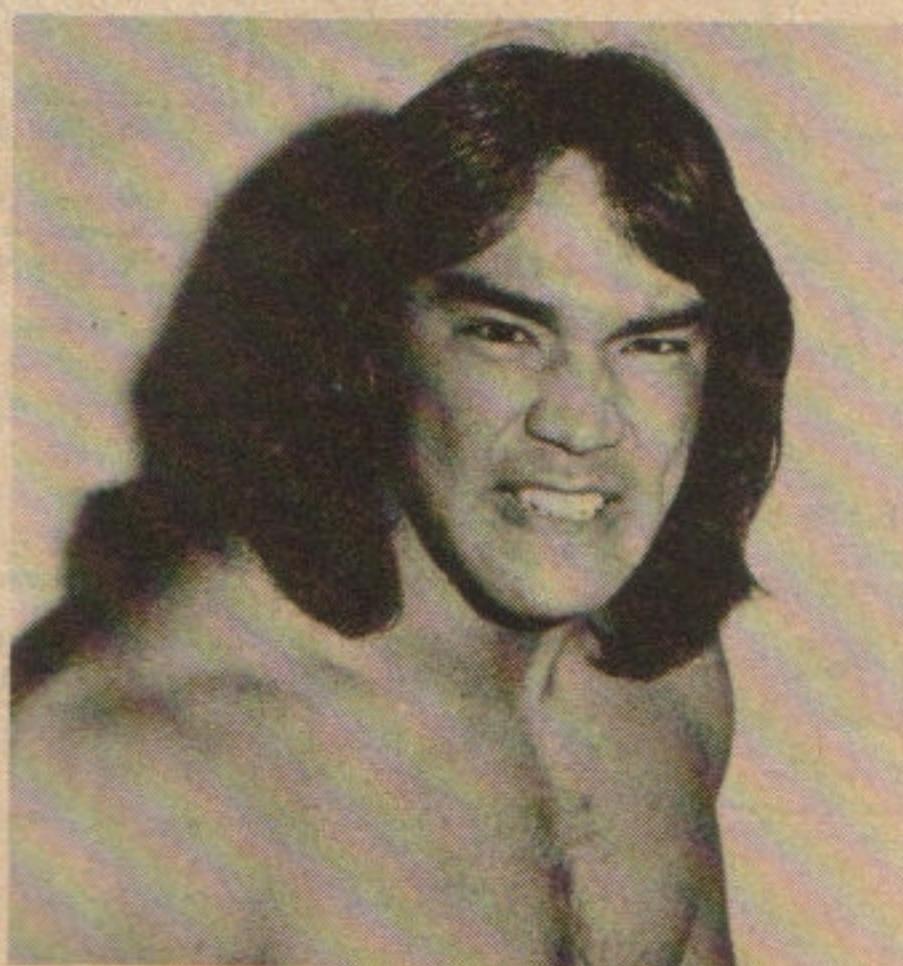
PATRICK LOUGHIN
Swarthmore, Pa.

Dear Patrick,

Of the many things I call Ted DiBiase, "wrestler" is nowhere among them. Secondly, any means used to rearrange that clown's face is acceptable to me. And lastly, from now on, call me. Mr. Shocket.



Pat Patterson is bleeding profusely during his recent bout against Ted DiBiase (above). The popular Rick Steamboat (below) dislikes Dan Shocket.



Dear Mr. Crude,

I don't like the terrible things you said about Rick Steamboat. He is my favorite wrestler. I don't like the way Flair, Ladd, Studd, Von Raschke and the rest of the dirty wrestlers talk about him. Let me tell you one thing—you better not write any more bad things about Rick or I'll try to break your neck.

DAWN CAPLE
Richmond, Va.
(Continued on page 54)

Matt Brock:

LOOKING AT...



I'M LOOKING AT one of the legends. Call him famous or infamous, depending on your perspective. But I have to chuckle when I hear one of these new kids talking about breaking legs. They act like they've created the dubious form of wrestling.

Not so. This guy did it. This guy wrote the book and is still adding chapters, many smeared in blood. All of them exciting. Whatever you think of The Sheik, you concede his skills. And guts.

Few quarrel with his influence on younger wrestlers. Many enter the sport with fanciful idealism. They think mere good looks and high moral fiber will carry them to the top.

They are painfully wrong. Often, it is The Sheik who inflicts this necessary lesson. He will silently and savagely blast through each of their well-honed gym maneuvers and leave them shattered on the canvas.

Then he will work on the body. Sometimes he will make your eyes blink and your hair curl with a Sheik specialty.

He has mystic powers. Don't scoff, I've seen them. So have his

victims. Somehow, he summons the powers of Islam through his fingertips. Somehow, fire howls from his hands and assaults his astonished victims.

Somewhat. I think his powers do not descend from heaven. Try the other direction.

Sometimes The Sheik will take a rookie under his wing. Gino Hernandez was a protege. Then he left. Went to Texas. Got meaner. Became more bitter. Developed a



terrible feud with David and Kevin Von Erich. Precisely the behavior which makes The Sheik proud.

But Hernandez did a very stupid



Above: Sheik uses his infamous pencil to carve Terry Funk's forehead. Left: Sheik camel clutches arch-enemy Bobo Brazil.

THE SHEIK



Before every match, Sheik places his ritual prayer shawl on the canvas and prays to Allah for strength.

thing. Incredibly dumb. He thought he was better than the master. He thought he could run The Sheik out of Detroit. Imagine that.

It was too awful to describe. I was there. I left midway through the match. Couldn't stand it anymore. Sheik derived satisfaction from the horrified expression on Gino's face.

Don't mess with the master.

Been tracking down rumors that The Sheik is coming to the WWF. He wants Bob Backlund and the federation belt. As always, The Sheik refuses to talk to me. Something happened between us 20 years ago. Ah, doesn't matter now. Not to me, anyway. Does to him.

He never forgets. Those icy eyes get colder and the lips grow tighter. Then something resembling a laugh pops out of his throat. Sounds almost like a strangling noise.

Someone is in terrible agony. The Sheik smiles. □

**Every month, three reporters from
PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED
will participate in an
incisive press conference with
a top wrestling star.
The questions will be demanding.
And the answers will reveal
the innermost thoughts of
the giants of the sport**

PRESS CONFERENCE



(This month, we asked Paul Jones to be the subject of our press conference. The interview, held in a dressing room, was conducted by Editor-in-Chief Peter King, and associate editors Steven Farhood and Randy Gordon.)

PETER KING: Paul, glad to see you.

PAUL JONES: Yeah, enough with the introductions.

RANDY GORDON: Paul, how has your life changed since that fateful night with Rick Steamboat?

JONES: Only for the better, Gordon. Before Steamboat attacked me, I was living with blinders on my eyes. I trusted and believed in people. Now I know better. I see that you trust only number one. I am number one. I will always be number one for as long as I live. Creeps like Steamboat, I swallow 'em whole and spit 'em out the side of my mouth.

STEVEN FARHOOD: Can you be so selfish and still be a member of a tag team?

JONES: Who are you?

Farhood: Steve Farhood.

"Before Steamboat attacked me, I was living with blinders on my eyes. I trusted and believed in people. Now I know better. I see that you trust only number one. I will always be number one for as long as I live. Creeps like Steamboat, I swallow 'em whole and spit 'em out the side of my mouth."



JONES: Oh, the new parasite. Well, four-eyes, you can be both. If you're good enough. Some guys can only devote themselves to individual wrestling because they're not bright enough or good enough. I can do both. I see myself with Baron Von Raschke as the number one individual wrestler in the number one tag team. And I'm alone. Me. Paul Jones. The greatest wrestler who ever lived.

KING: Does fan reaction bother you? Where once you were cheered, now you're . . .

JONES: Fans, who needs fans? What good do they do you? You have the scientific wrestlers always listening to the fans. Next thing they know, wallop city, man. And they're through the ropes because they were paying too much attention to

the fans.

FARHOOD: Then you ignore them?

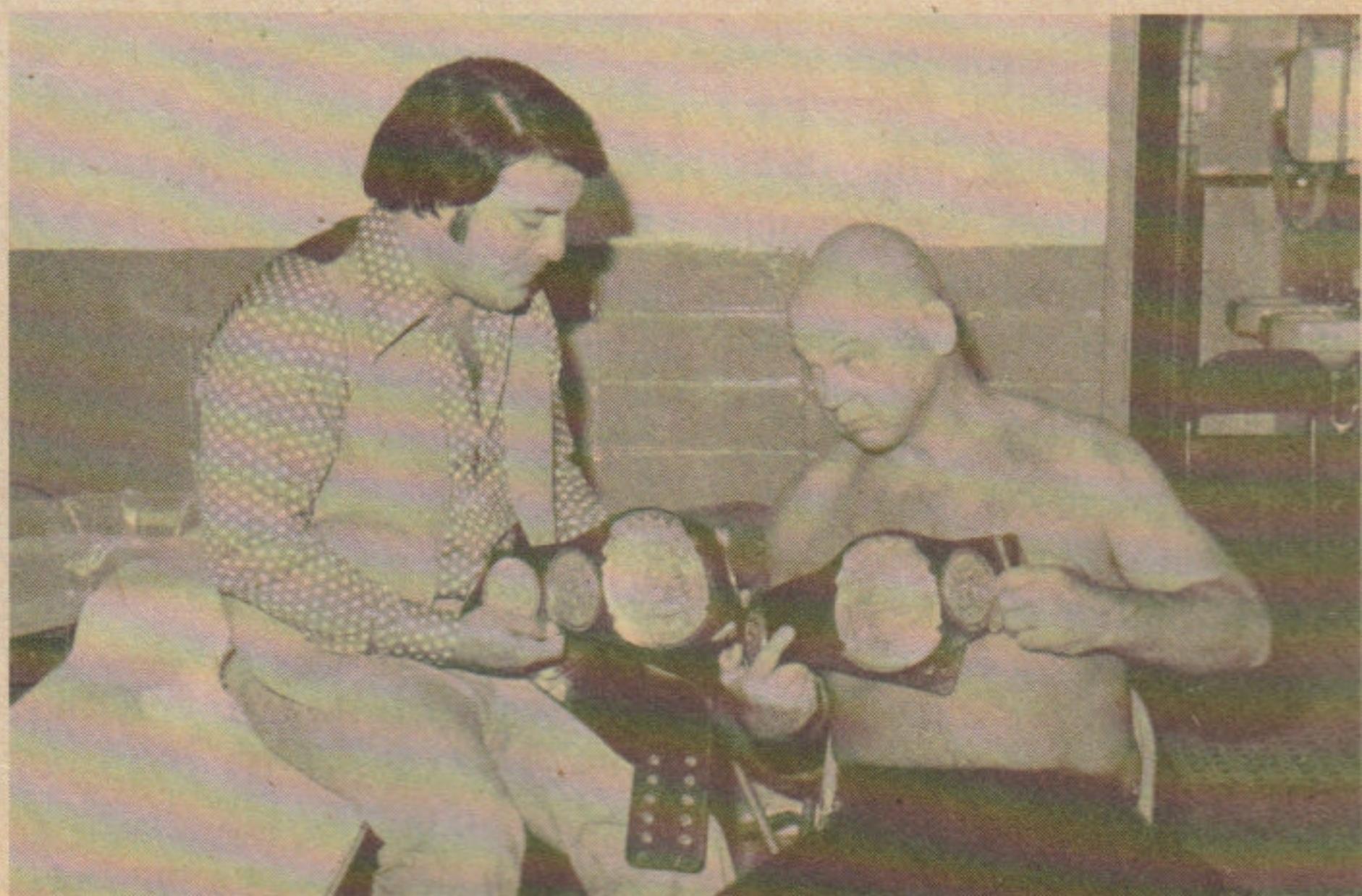
JONES: Why shouldn't I. What have they ever done for me?

(At this point, Baron Von Raschke, Jones' partner, enters the room.)

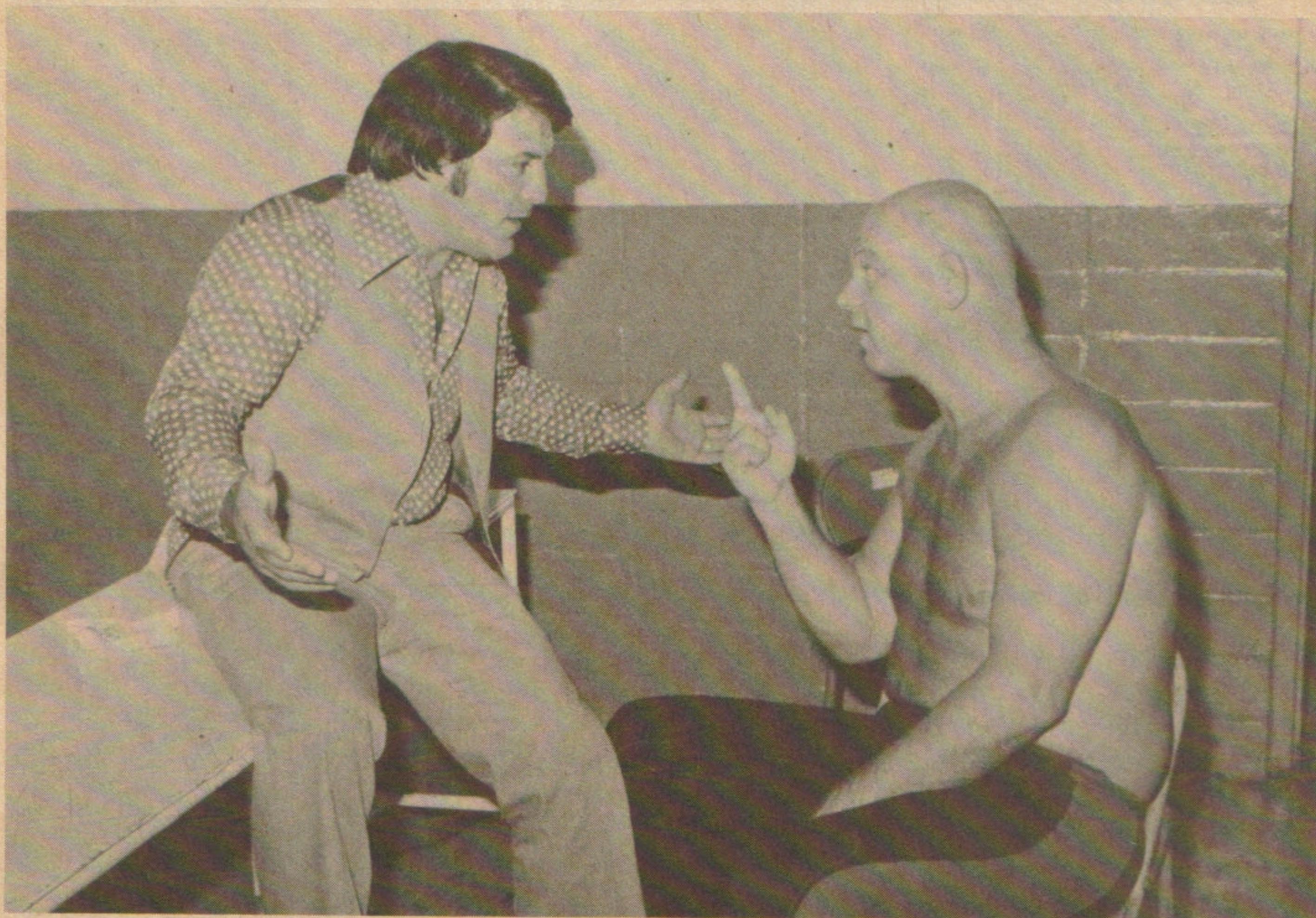
BARON VON RASCHKE: Hey, what's going on? These creep reporters hassling you?

JONES: No, I consented to this lunacy. Owe it to myself, the number one wrestler.

RASCHKE: Yeah, we're the number one tag team.



"See this medallion I wear around my neck? This has been in the Von Raschke family for centuries. It was a gift of admiration and respect. It is only given to those who the Von Raschkes know are men of greatness and brilliance. Around the neck of a punk like Steamboat or Flair, this medallion would quickly rust."



GORDON: Don't you think you would have been much better off if that nasty episode with Steamboat had never occurred?

JONES: Best thing that ever happened to me. I hate punks like Steamboat and Flair.

FARHOOD: You hate Flair? I thought the two of you have a lot in common.

JONES: Flair is a slow-moving, slow-witted cry baby. He has neither guts nor brains. I am in a

class by myself. I simply walk in the ring and pulverize opponents.

RASCHKE: Me and Paul whip anything that moves.

JONES: As I said, I am number one. Now and forever.

KING: A final question, Paul. People are wondering how long it will be before you and the Baron split.

JONES: See this medallion I wear around my neck? This has

been in the Von Raschke family for centuries. It was a gift of admiration and respect. It is only given to those who the Von Raschkes know are men of greatness and brilliance. Around the neck of a punk like Steamboat or Flair, this medallion would quickly rust.

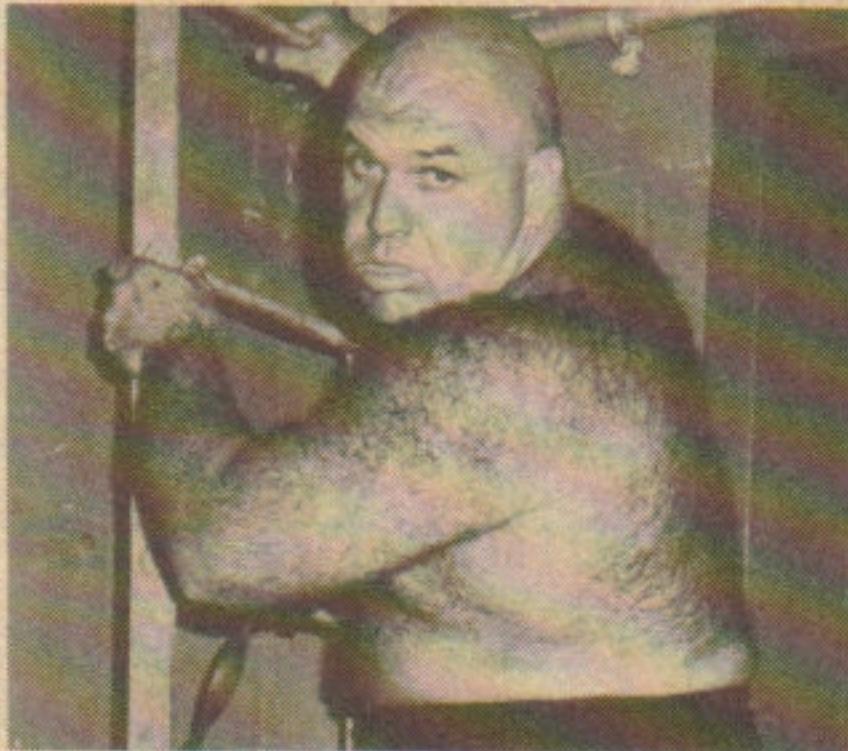
KING: Paul, we appreciate your cooperation.

JONES: Your pleasure, I'm sure. □

THE MORGESTEIN REPORT.....

By Gary Morgenstein

DOUBLE TROUBLE— STEELE AND BROWER



There is much support among various elements for a tag team comprised of George "The Animal" Steele and Bulldog Brower. Since both Brower and the present champions, The Valiant Brothers, are charges of Lou Albano's, Brower refused comment. As a team, Brower and Steele would give foes fits.

FULLERS CHALLENGE RACE

Ron and Robert Fuller are fed up with NWA champ Harley Race's cowardice! Though they are two of the top young wrestlers in the area, the Fullers have not received a fair number of title bouts. And

when they do get a shot at Race, they claim Harley runs away and refuses to wrestle cleanly. I predict Race will give *both* of them fair shots and whip the brothers Fuller.



THE SHEIK TO WWF?

Matt Brock deserves the credit of first breaking the story. I'm giving the skeleton some meat. According to my source, Lou Albano phoned The Sheik with a desperate plea. Unable to find anyone capable of defeating Bob Backlund, Albano made The Sheik an astronomical offer to come east. My source was unsure of precisely how much, but he guessed it was in the neighborhood of half a million bucks.

RICH REFUSES OFFER



Nothing tempts a fiendish rulebreaker like the Masked Superstar more than a young, handsome kid with talent. Wrestlers like Tommy Rich drive Masked Superstar up the wall. So it was inevitable. Superstar offered Rich a large sum of money to attack Mr. Wrestling II. Tommy told Superstar to stuff his head in a pecan pie. Smart boy.

(Continued on page 58)

SPECIAL CONTEST

EVERY SO OFTEN, a wrestler will return the devotion of his legions. He will attempt to repay

the nights of loving. Chief Jay Strongbow is doing exactly that.

"I wanted to show all my fans how much I appreciate their support over the years," Strongbow said. "They have been with me through victories and losses, the good times and the bad."

**One of
wrestling's most
beloved figures,
Chief Jay Strongbow,
is offering his most
prized possession:
an authentic
Indian
headdress.
Yes, any fan
can win this
incredible prize
by entering this
contest**

**WIN
CHIEF JAY
STRONGBOW'S
HEADDRESS!!!**

"My fans show their love every time I climb into the ring. When I was in the hospital recuperating from the broken leg Valentine inflicted, they sent me telegrams and flowers and called me."

"It surely picked up my spirits," Strongbow said. "Now it is my time. Oh, I know some fans will say that my triumphs are reward enough. Maybe for

(Continued on page 56)

WORD LIST

ANDERSON
ANDRE THE GIANT
BACKLUND
BOCKWINKEL
DIBIASE
GRAHAM
KOLOFF
MAIVIA
MASCARAS
MCDANIEL
MULLIGAN
MURDOCH
PATTERSON
RACE
RHODES
SAMMARTINO
SPOILER
STRONGBOW
VALIANT
VON ERICH

A	N	D	R	O	T	H	E	G	M	A	I	V	I	A	I	A	N
S	P	O	I	W	L	E	R	L	A	W	L	E	R	M	C	T	S
C	A	D	R	O	S	A	R	A	C	S	A	M	E	I	N	H	P
H	E	N	B	B	O	C	K	W	I	N	K	O	L	A	A	A	O
R	C	U	R	G	E	C	A	R	A	C	T	F	I	D	G	S	I
I	S	L	A	N	M	R	H	O	D	H	S	G	A	I	I	B	L
S	R	K	E	O	O	B	N	I	C	A	E	T	R	B	L	R	E
M	V	C	V	R	U	J	O	O	M	H	V	A	L	I	L	A	R
C	A	A	A	T	E	L	D	C	T	V	O	N	E	A	U	I	G
D	L	B	N	S	A	R	H	E	K	D	A	S	R	S	M	R	F
A	I	A	B	D	U	G	R	C	D	W	V	A	I	E	A	H	F
N	S	U	R	M	E	D	R	W	I	S	I	M	C	H	B	C	O
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L	D	E	H	O	U	R	D	O	C	A	S	N	O	E	G	H	K
S	E	L	E	S	H	A	L	E	N	H	S	N	O	R	L	I	L
O	R	P	N	O	S	R	E	T	T	A	P	M	F	V	S	L	I
N	T	N	A	I	L	A	V	S	A	M	M	A	R	T	I	N	O

INSTRUCTIONS: In the above puzzle, the 20 wrestlers names you see in the word list on the top left of the page are hidden. We've given you a head start by circling STRONGBOW. Remember, the names can be hidden horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. To qualify for the grand prize, you must send in a completed puzzle with *all* the wrestlers names circled as in the example. Good luck!

STRONGBOW HEADDRESS CONTEST ENTRY BLANK

Please Print Clearly

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

**ALL ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 1, 1979
 WINNERS WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN THE MARCH ISSUE OF PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED**

Send Completed Puzzle and Entry Blank to:

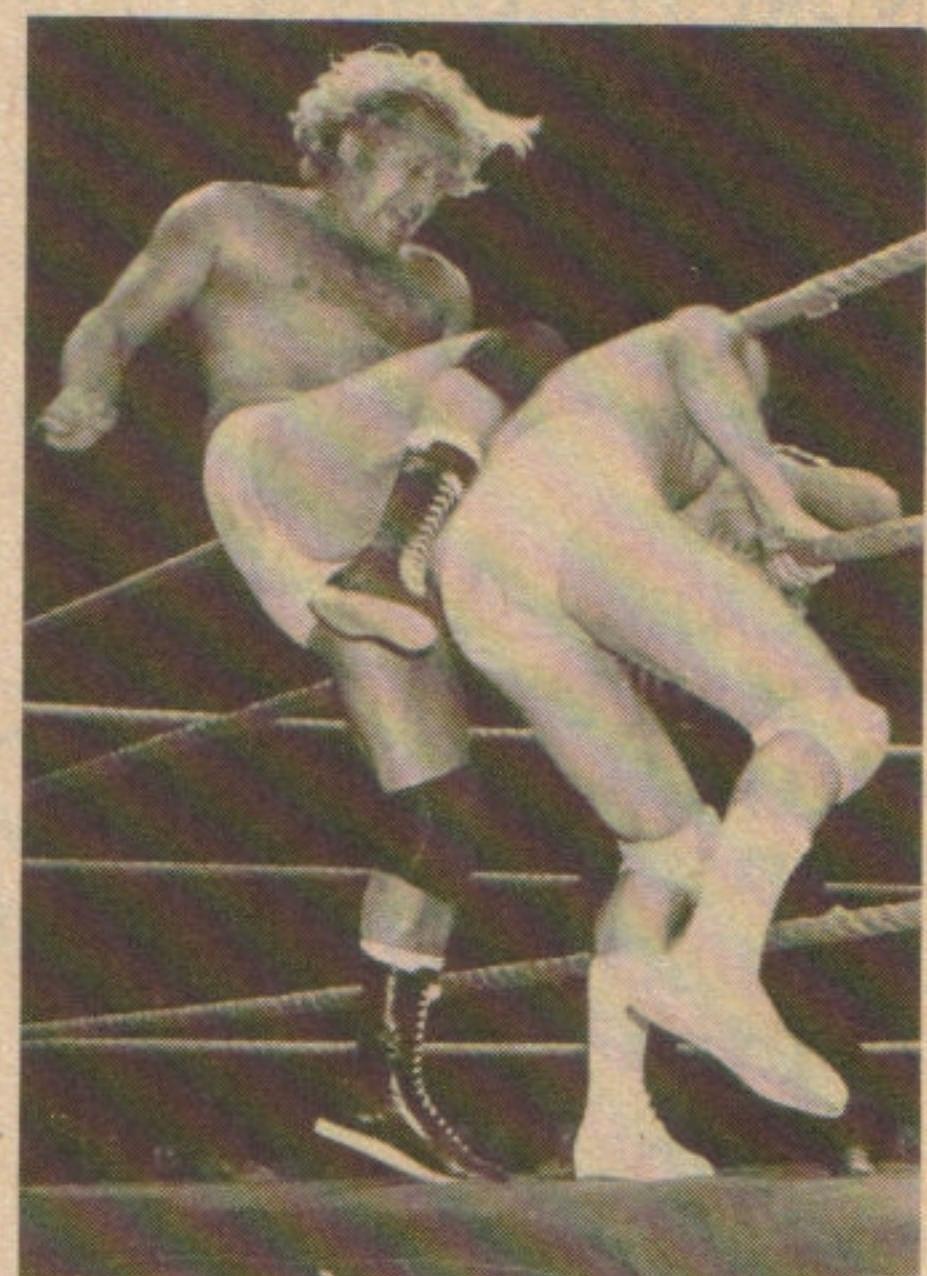
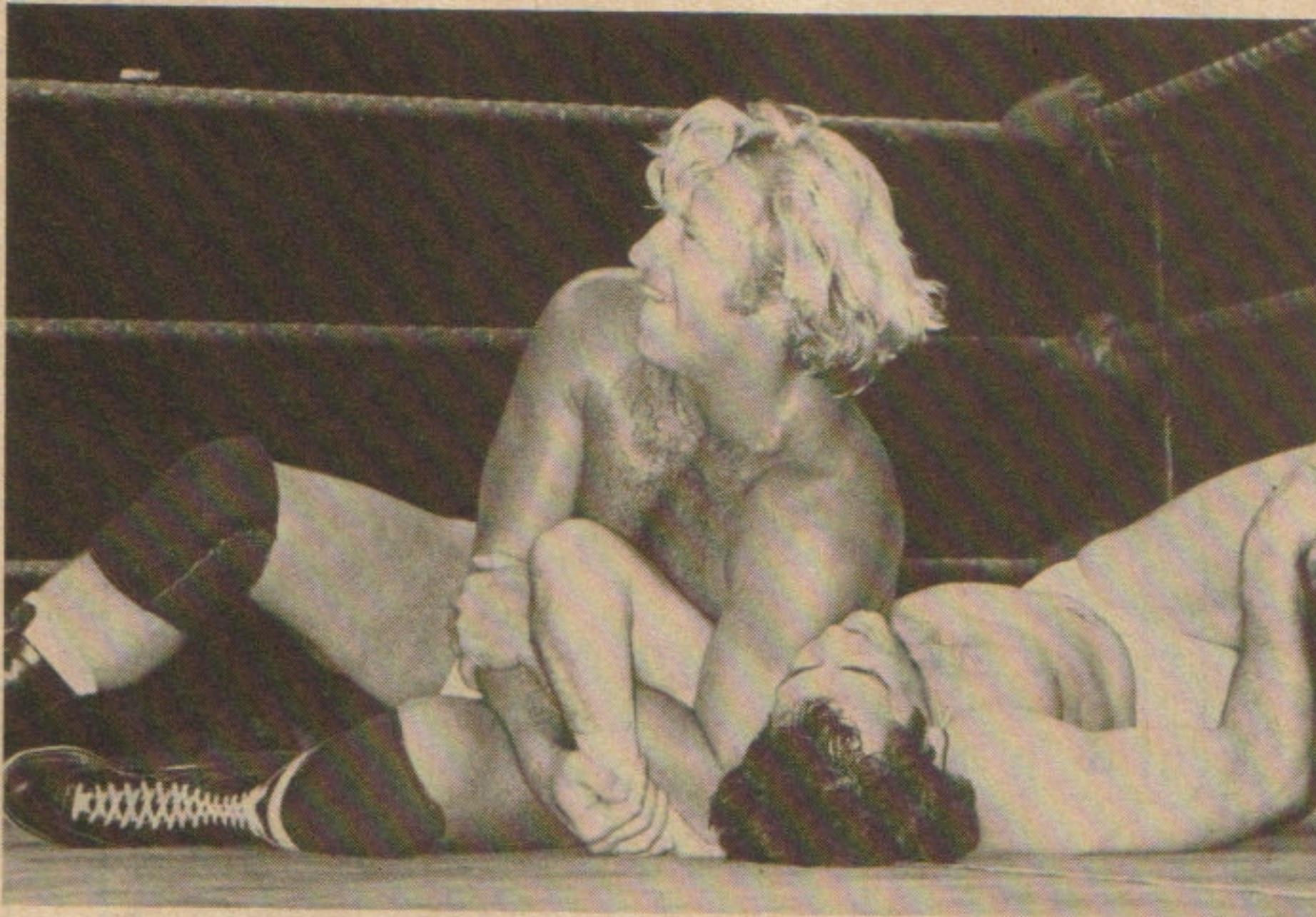
TV SPORTS

BOX 48

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N.Y. 11571

SPECIAL CONTEST

Revealed



FOR GREG GAGNE to be listed as the AWA's number one contender (qualifying him for title shots against champion Nick Bockwinkel), he must register a specific number of victories over the other top 10 contenders.

Twenty per month for a period of not less than four months. Gagne doesn't meet this requirement. Yet he has not suffered an alarming number of defeats.

The rulebreakers of the alliance refuse to wrestle him. Unless Gagne gets matches, he can't move up to number one. Unless he's number one, Bockwinkel won't give him a title shot.

"When the punk deserves a shot, he'll get one. And not before," Bockwinkel snapped.

Some would call this the "Catch-22" syndrome. But it's not as simple as fate or a fluke occurrence. Gagne's inability to move into the top contender's

NICK BOCKWINKEL'S PLOT TO KEEP GREG GAGNE FROM WINNING

slot is the direct result of a conspiracy among Bockwinkel and other AWA rulebreakers.

"I'd like to figure out what's going on," Gagne said sorrowfully.

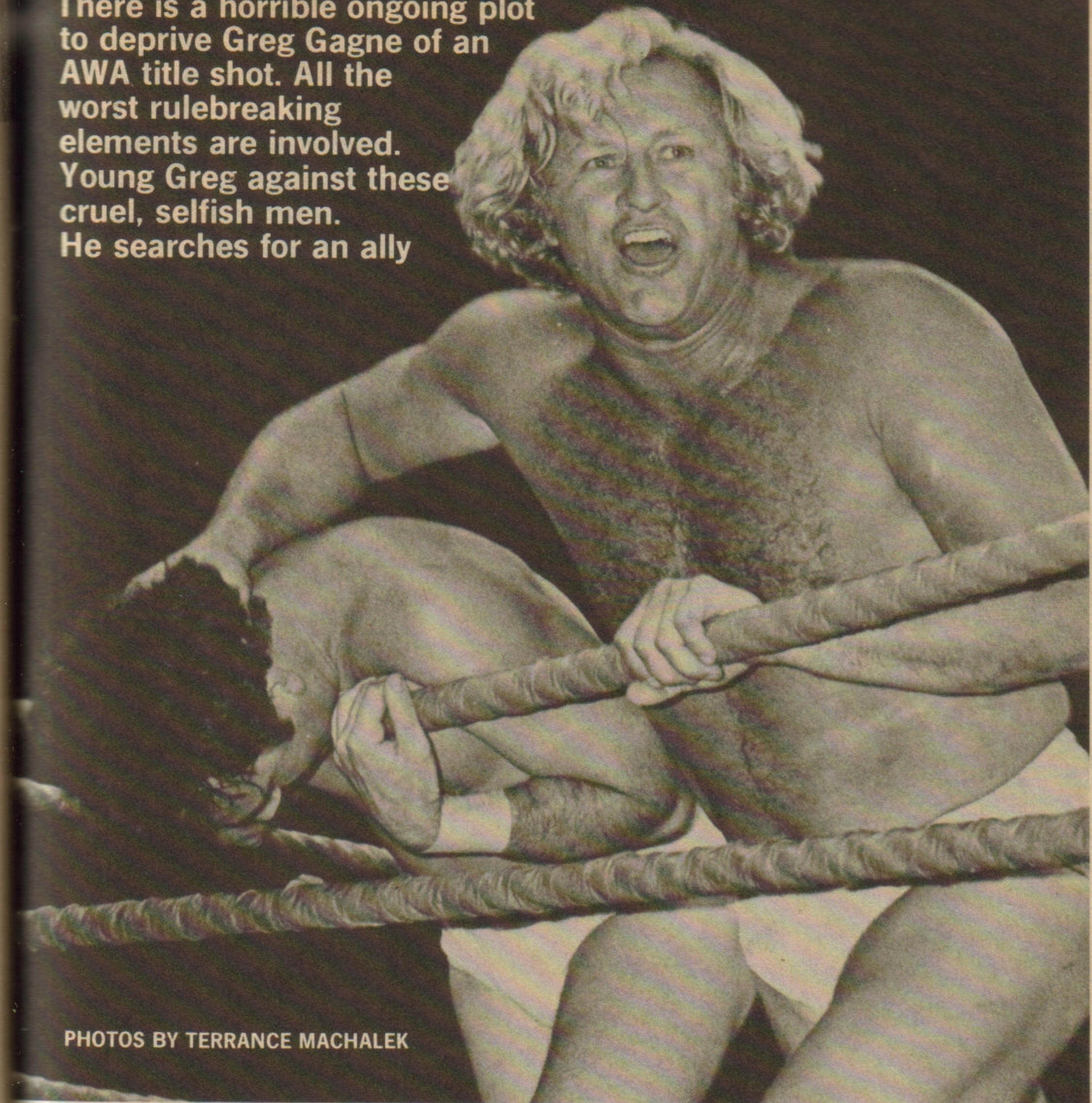
We did. Through shrewd

In a recent non-title bout, AWA king Nick Bockwinkel temporarily neutralizes Greg Gagne (above left). The match turns into a brawl (above and right). Gagne legitimately won the bout.

measures, we were able to obtain a copy of a letter written by Bockwinkel.

"Greg Gagne poses a serious problem for us," Bockwinkel's letter read. "He and his father are dangerous to the future of

**There is a horrible ongoing plot
to deprive Greg Gagne of an
AWA title shot. All the
worst rulebreaking
elements are involved.
Young Greg against these
cruel, selfish men.
He searches for an ally**



PHOTOS BY TERRANCE MACHALEK

NG THE AWA TITLE

our alliance. Therefore, all efforts must be directed toward denying Greg Gagne future matches."

Letters were sent to Ray Stevens, Pat Patterson and Super Destroyer II. They

responded immediately.

"I ain't ashamed to tell you what my reaction was," laughed Super Destroyer II. "I told Nicky I'd be pleased to stop that kid."

"I don't like wrestlin' him

anyway," Patterson said. "He's no-talent and a bum, to boot."

"What letter?" Stevens asked innocently.

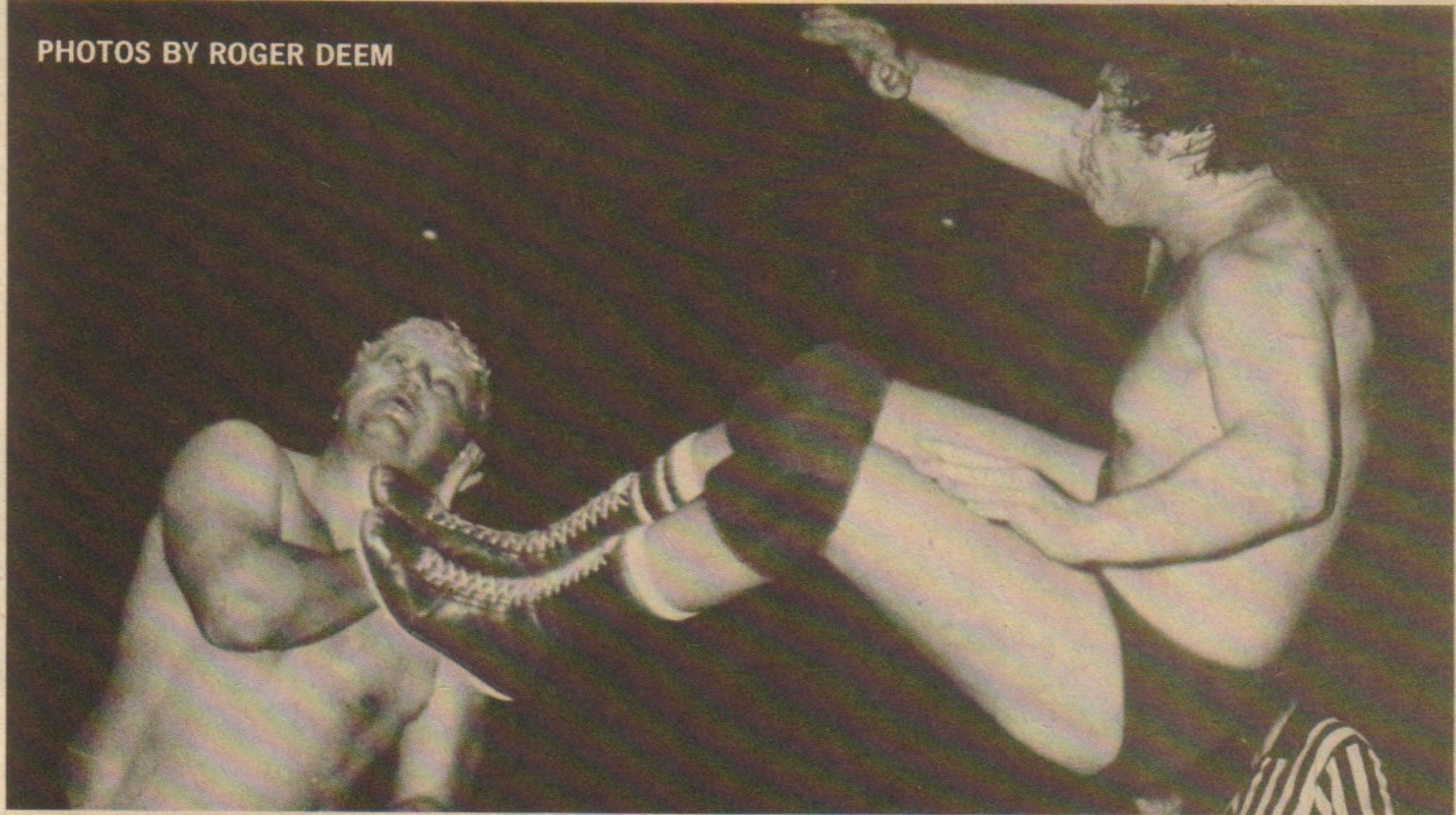
Conspiracies are illegal. However, proving them is a
(Continued on page 62)

DiBIASE VS. MURDOCH:

When they entered the ring, both Ted DiBiase and Dick Murdoch were plagued with doubts. On a warm, muggy night in St. Louis, the doubts disappeared. And when the mist of cigarette smoke and body heat had faded, they stood in the squared circle, smothered by greatness

GREATNESS IN ST. LOUIS

PHOTOS BY ROGER DEEM



Ted DiBiase displays his incredibly sophisticated skills with a perfect flying dropkick against Dick Murdoch. The two talented grapplers thrilled St. Louis fans with a tremendous battle. DiBiase is a youngster with great potential. Murdoch is a veteran who has seen it all. Together, they excelled.

THE SPEAR WAS cracked. It would never penetrate the lion's hide. Stop the hunt! But it was too late. The huge beast charged. Ted DiBiase hurled the useless weapon, only to see it splinter on contact. The animal's jaws opened wide, fangs glistening.

Ted DiBiase awoke in a cold sweat. No one had to tell him

what the dream meant. In less than 12 hours, he would be faced with a challenge equal to that of a young warrior having to slay his first lion. Facing him across the wrestling ring would be Dick Murdoch. The wily veteran had promised to humiliate Ted. "He doesn't deserve to wrestle me," Murdoch had

sworn, "and I'll be glad to prove it!"

Ted arose slowly from bed. Like most professional athletes, he carefully checked the movements of his body. The night can bring stiffness to muscles or joints. Ted had to be in perfect shape today. The preliminary check found

(Continued on page 64)



WHY THE FANS WILL NEVER CALL HARLEY RACE CHAMPION

A bloodied and battered Dusty Rhodes hits NWA champion Harley Race with the famed "Bionic Elbow." Rhodes remains the fans' choice.

PHOTOS BY PAUL BAUMAN

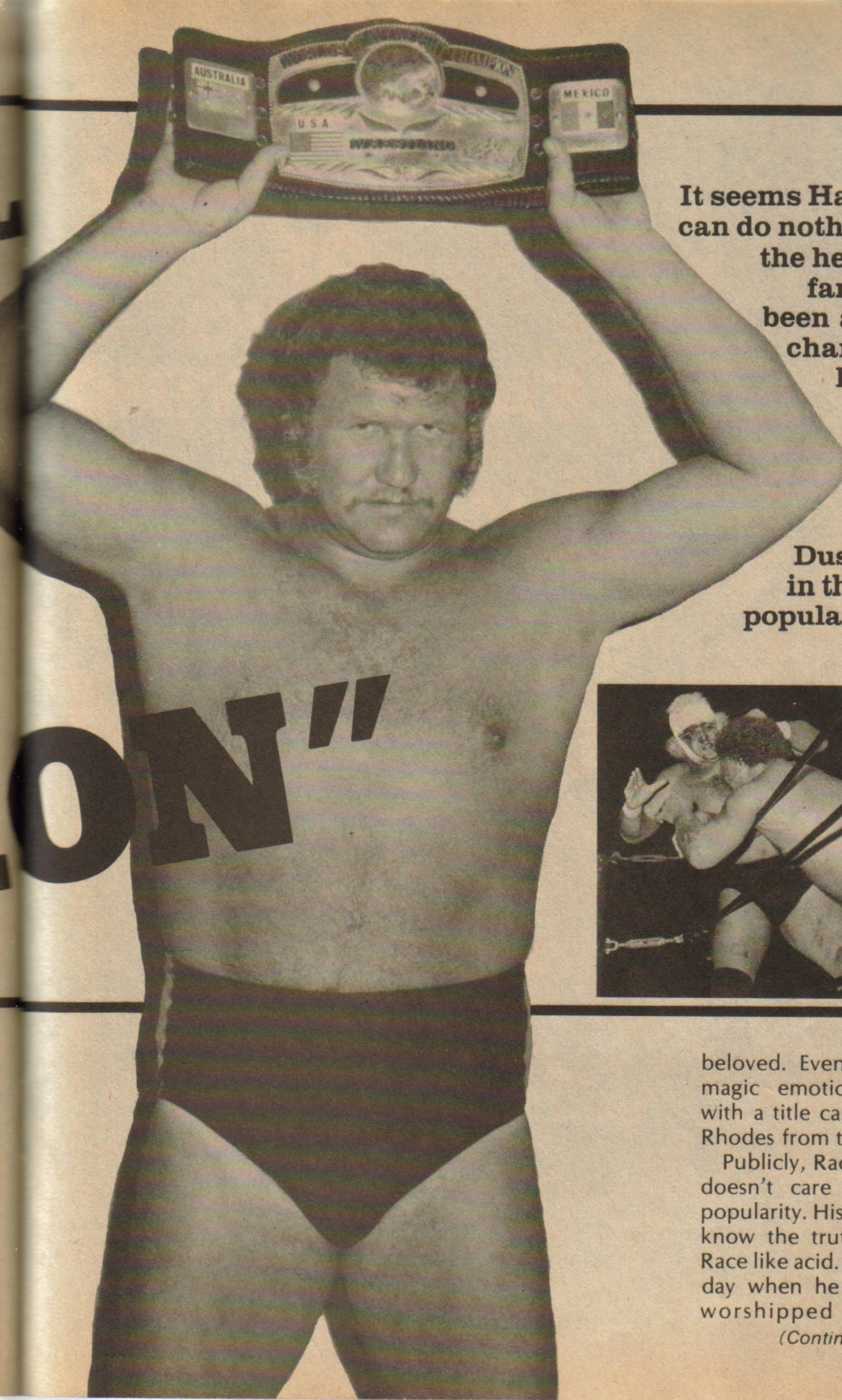
THE WEIGHT OF the championship belt felt good around his waist. Harley Race admired himself in the mirror. King of the NWA, victorious again and again in top competition, admired and feared throughout the world—this was Harley Race. Most men don't dare to dream of such success. This should be

the best of all possible worlds. Race thought and turned angrily from the mirror.

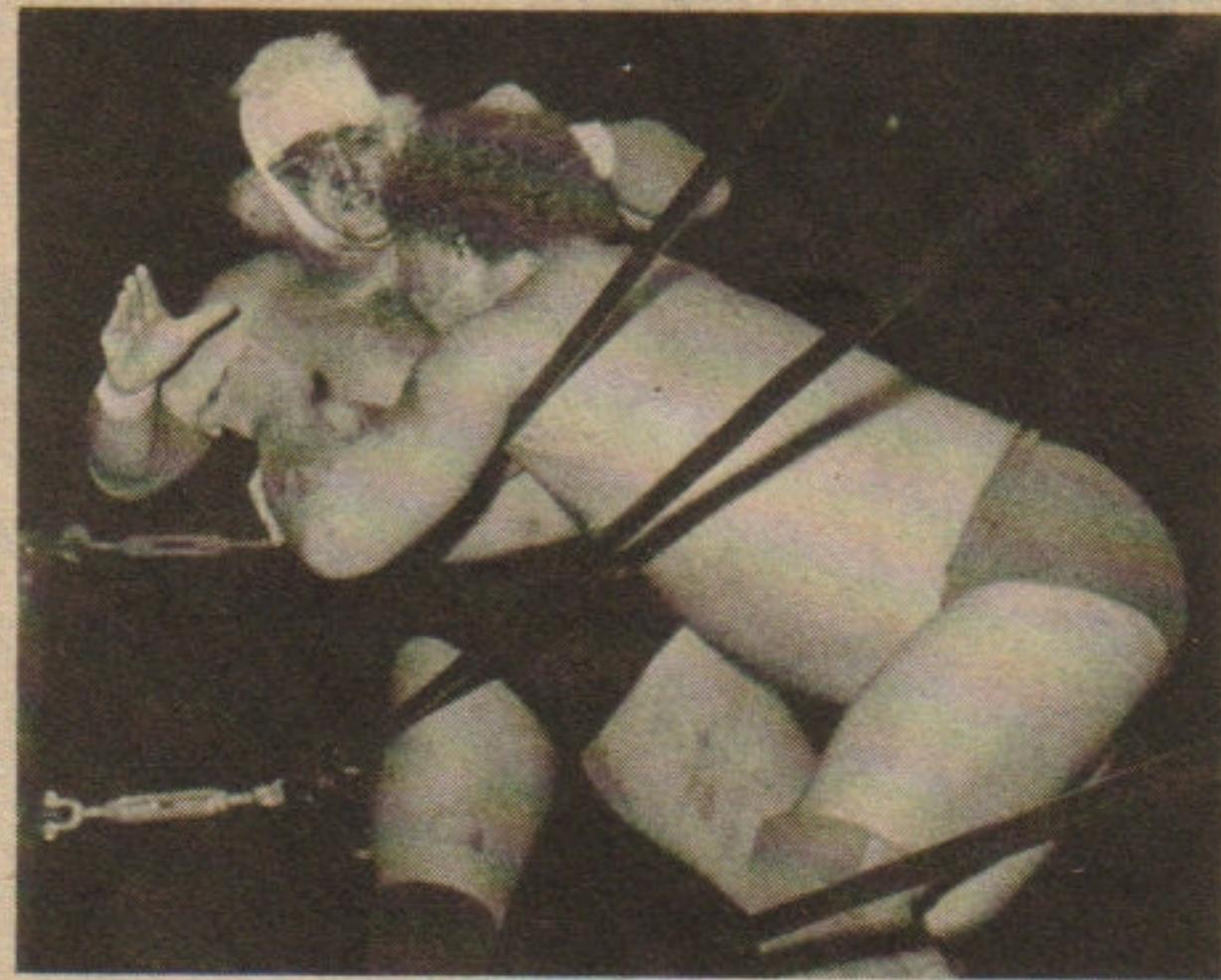
The best of all possible worlds for Race would have to be without Dusty Rhodes. This enormously popular wrestler is considered by the fans to be "the people's champion," enjoyed the adulation Race believes belongs to him. After all, the

two have battled several times and Rhodes has failed to win the belt. Harley Race is champion. Why don't the fans appreciate that?

Race returned to his reflection in the mirror. He had to admit he wasn't the type of guy to inspire love. Respect, terror, and envy, that's what people feel around Race. Dusty Rhodes is



It seems Harley Race can do nothing to win the hearts of the fans. He has been a brilliant champion. He has shown a crude dignity. But he cannot defeat Dusty Rhodes in the ultimate popularity match

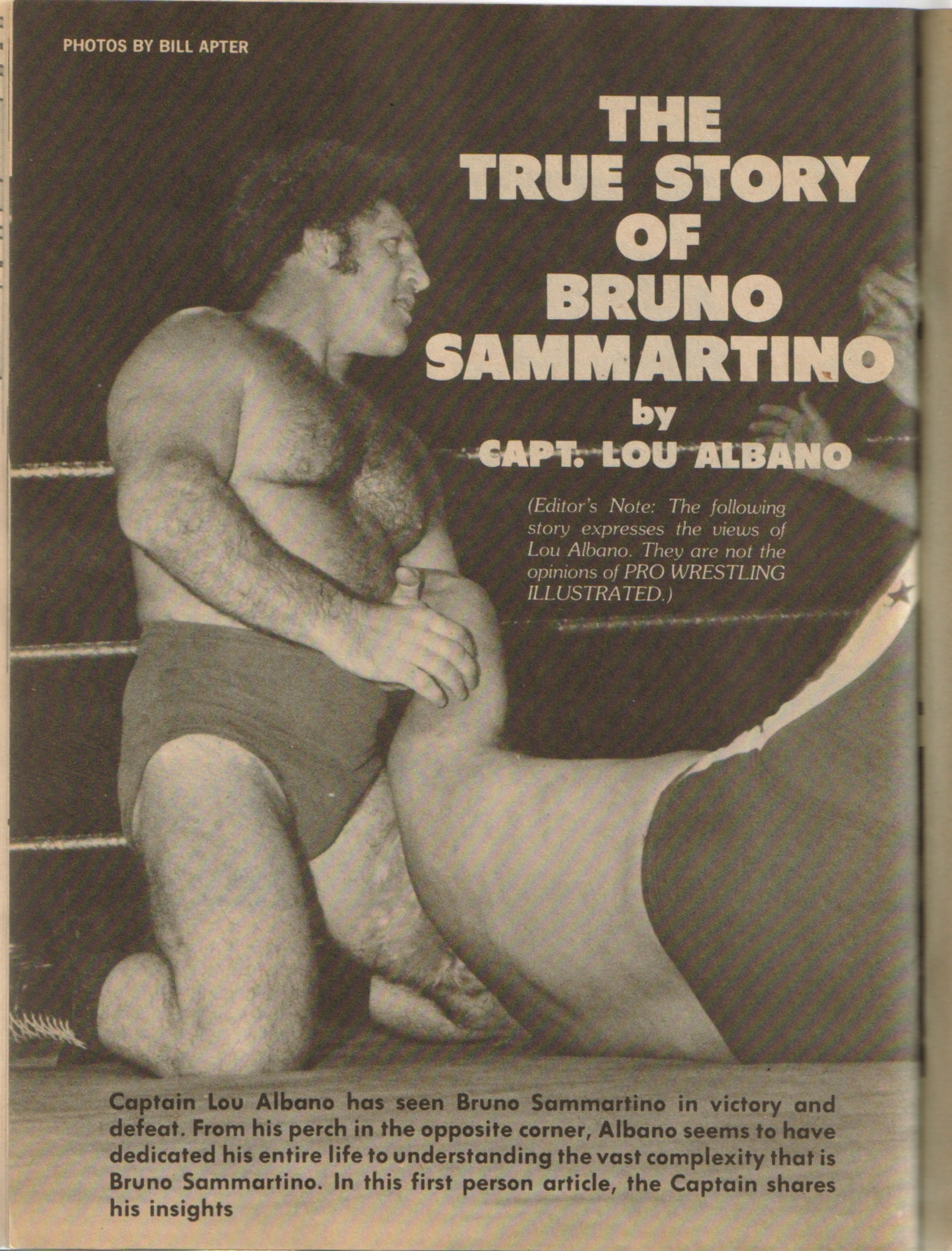


beloved. Even the powerful magic emotions connected with a title can't force Dusty Rhodes from the fans' hearts.

Publicly, Race contends he doesn't care about Dusty's popularity. His trusted friends know the truth. It eats into Race like acid. He lives for the day when he can drive the worshipped Rhodes out

(Continued on page 66)

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER



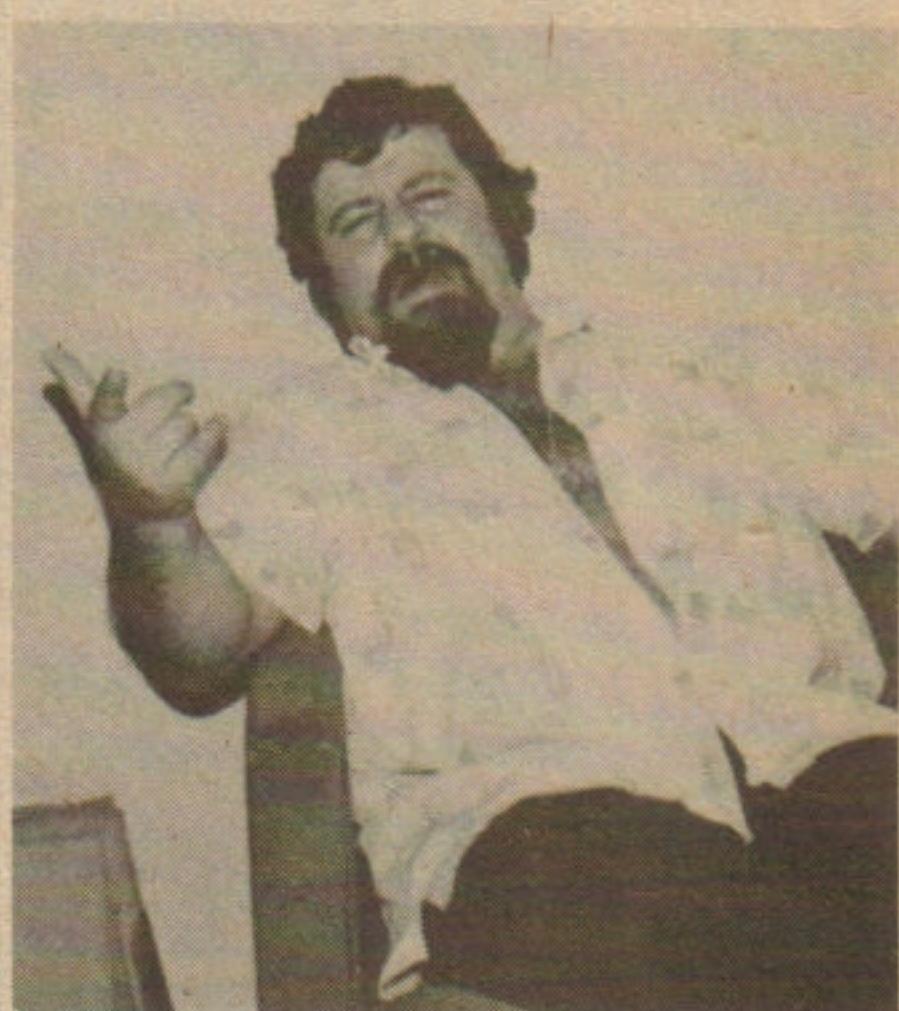
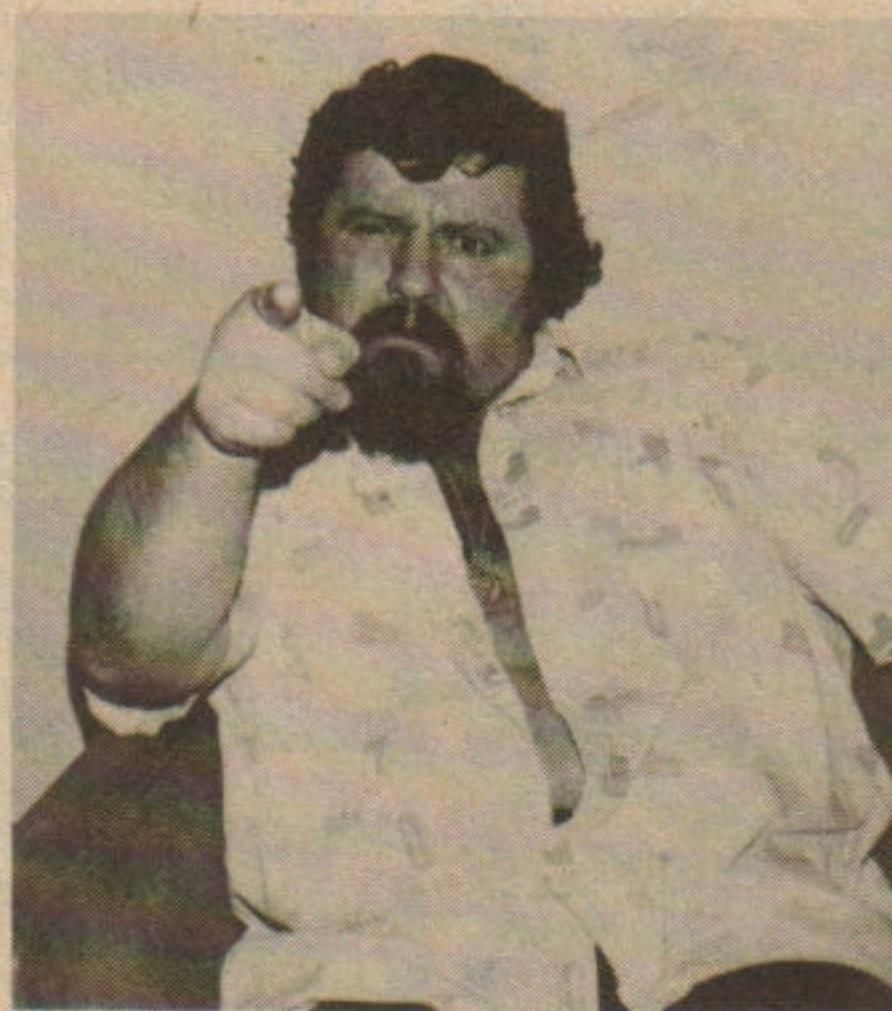
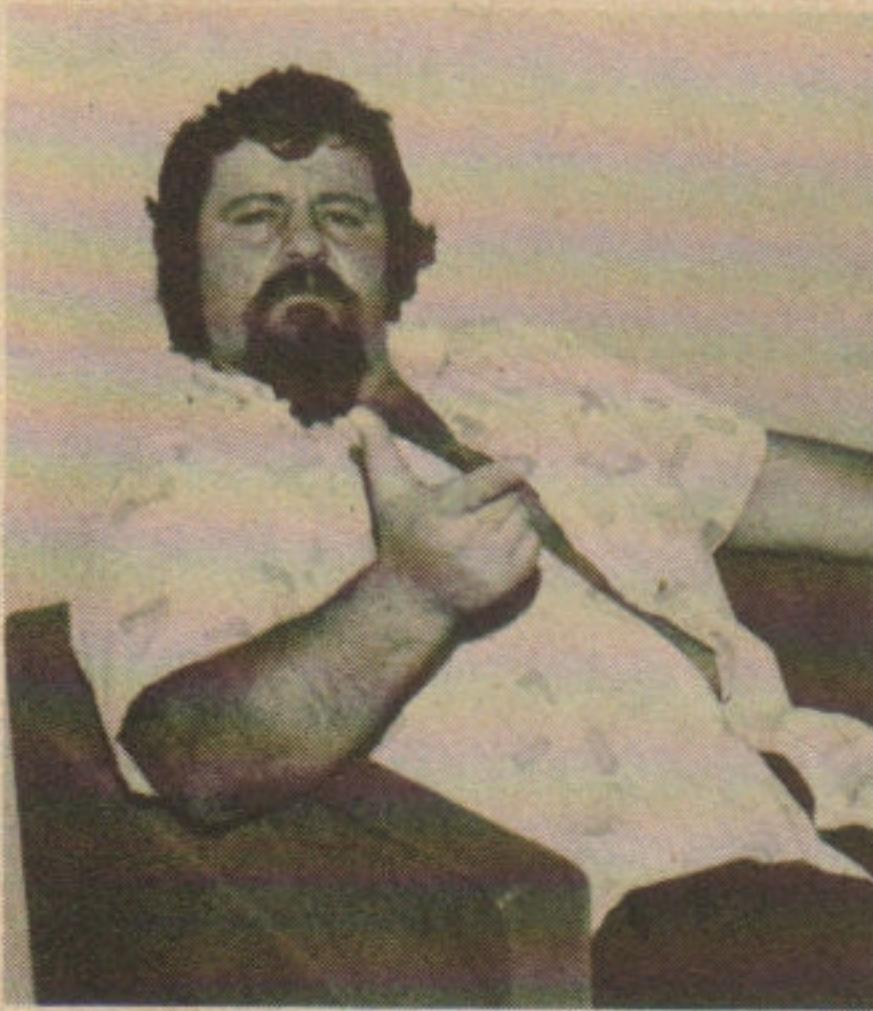
THE TRUE STORY OF **BRUNO SAMMARTINO**

by
CAPT. LOU ALBANO

(Editor's Note: The following story expresses the views of Lou Albano. They are not the opinions of PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED.)

Captain Lou Albano has seen Bruno Sammartino in victory and defeat. From his perch in the opposite corner, Albano seems to have dedicated his entire life to understanding the vast complexity that is Bruno Sammartino. In this first person article, the Captain shares his insights

"I'll give Sammartino credit. He's gotten far on no talent. You take a guy with a mashed-in, ugly face, a misshapen body and no speed or strength and somehow, someway, he becomes champion. Well, I can't figure it out. And if I can't, no one can."



When the fools at this magazine asked me to write a story about Bruno Sammartino, I had to go to the bathroom. Hey, I'd just eaten, and thinking about pasta-puss makes me nauseous. But I owe it to my fans, the guys who want the truth. So this is what I think about meatball-mind.

The man's outta shape. The

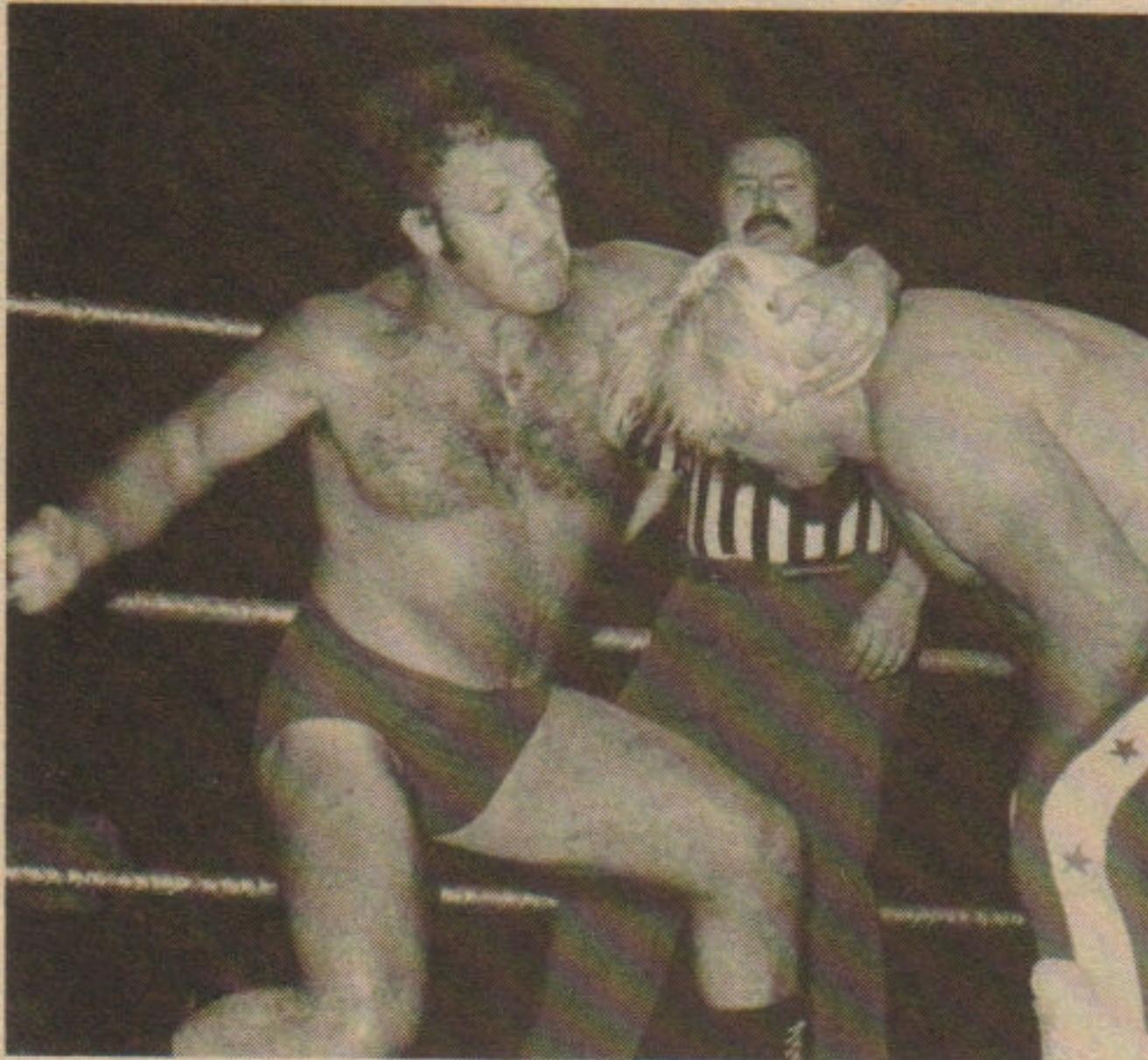
man's washed-up. The man's got no moves left. The man's over-the-hill. Wait, wait, I'll document everything.

I'll give Sammarstinko credit. He's gotten far on no talent. You take a guy with a mashed-in, ugly face, a misshapen body and no speed or strength and somehow, somehow, he becomes champion. Well, I

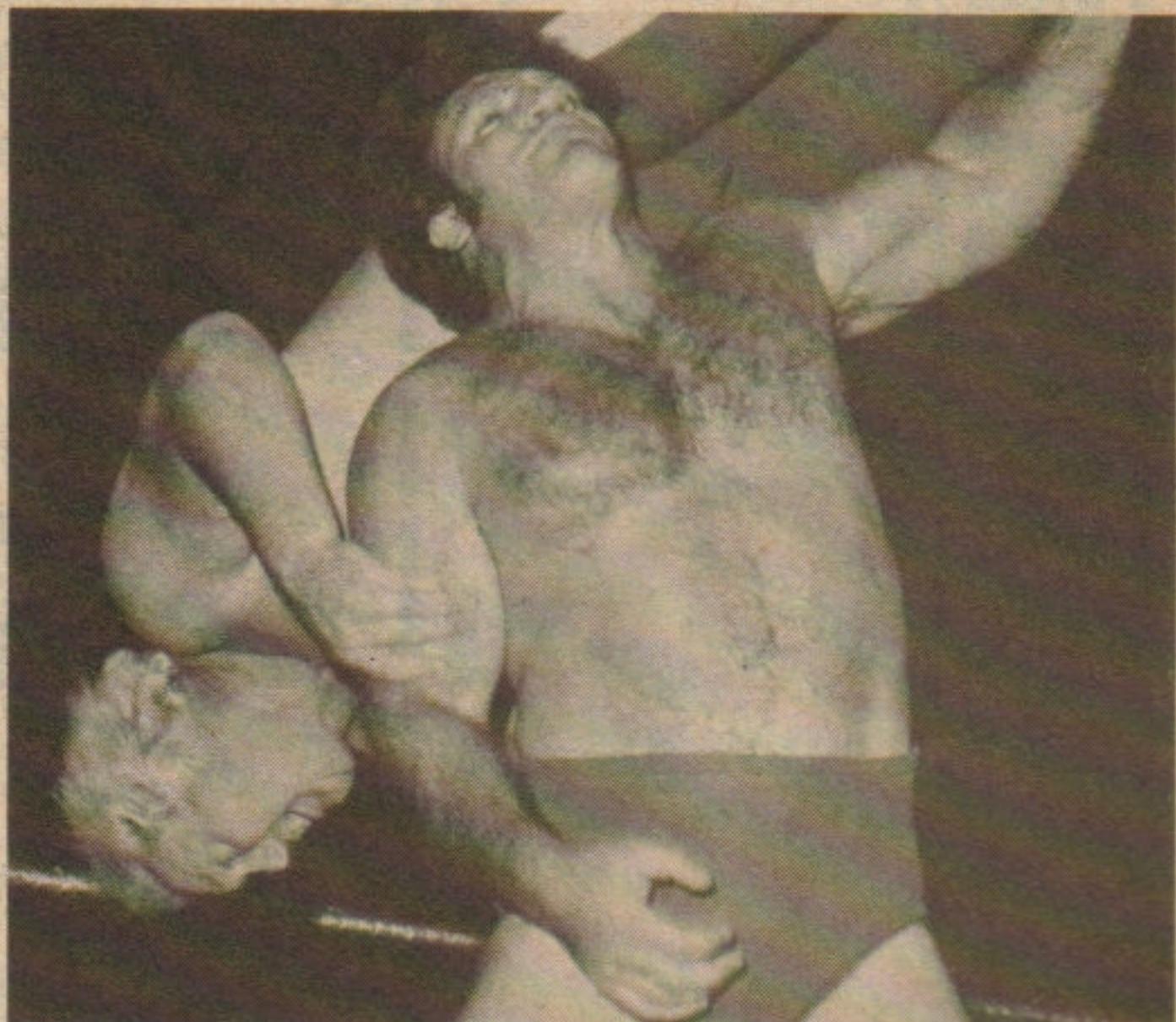
can't figure it out. And if I can't no one can.

Maybe people can't wrestle spaghetti-brain because they're too busy laughing at him. I am. Or maybe the stench of garlic crumples their will. Possible. In any case, I'm dealing with him because someone has to pull back the Sammartino legend

(Continued on page 68)



"The Living Legend" is about to show his true style (above). Note the clenched fist. Quite illegal!



Bruno wrestles like an old shopping bag woman. See how he has to strain to flip a real wrestler, Jerry Valiant (above).

VOLUME I, No. 2

WRESTLING

NOVEMBER 1979

ENQUIRER

BLOODY BACKLUND LOSES; RETAINS TITLE

BY RANDY GORDON

NEW YORK, N.Y.—When it was all over, Bob Backlund had lost. The match was stopped on cuts. True, Backlund retained his title. More importantly, he was able to save his life.

Pat Patterson opened his bag of mischief and nearly killed Backlund.

LOVED EVERY MINUTE

"It was my pleasure, teaching that punk a lesson," snarled Patterson. "Now that I'm WWF champion, there'll be a new aura around here. No more whining and crying."

Fortunately, Patterson is *not* champion. But he promised an appeal to the WWF commissioners. He feels he earned the title.



A horribly cut Bob Backlund gasps for air after being thrown out of the ring by Pat Patterson. Backlund's cuts impaired his breathing, forcing the referee to halt the bout.

Wahoo And Rich In Brutal Rematch Against Anderson And Koloff

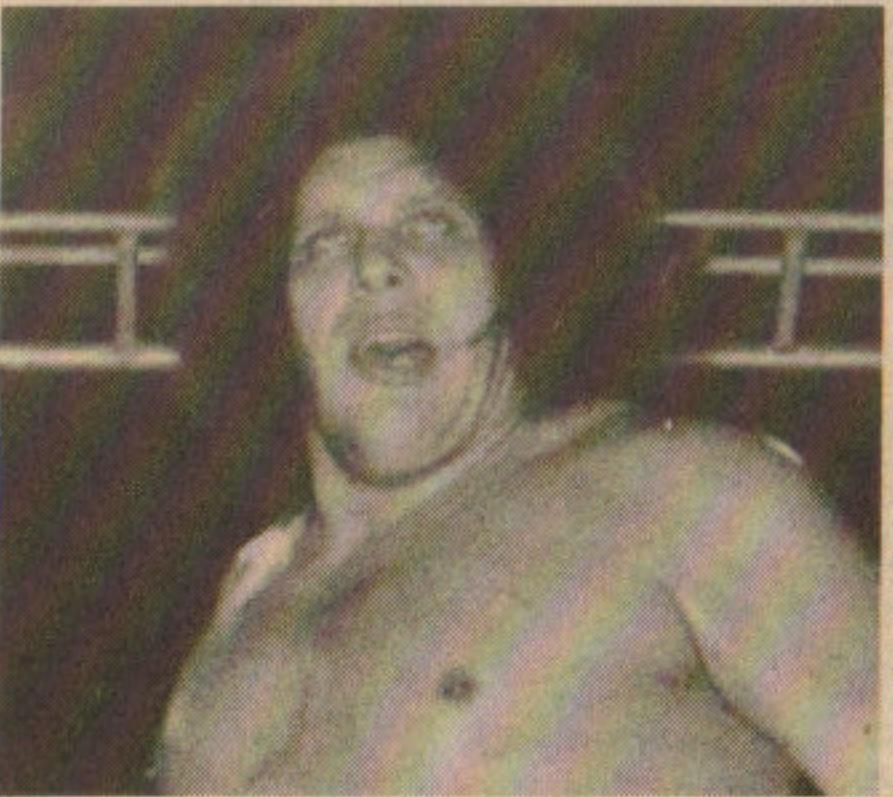
BY BILL APTER

ATLANTA, GA.—This was the fifth time that Wahoo McDaniel and Tommy Rich defended their Georgia tag team title against former champs Ole Anderson and Ivan Koloff. It was almost their last time.

Anderson and Koloff don't conceal their mutual contempt for McDaniel and Rich. The feeling is mutual. But when the blood had cleared, the champs were still champs.

"We'll beat 'em until they're black and blue," Wahoo said with a triumphant smile.

Andre and Brodie Confident; Prepare Challenge To Hart's Army



Andre the Giant stares across the ring at hated foe Spoiler.

BY MATT BROCK

DALLAS, TEXAS—"When I think of everything that Gary Hart has done wrong to wrestling, my blood boils," declared Andre the Giant before he and Bruiser Brodie met Spoiler and Mark Lewin.

More than blood boiled in Andre the Giant that night. An intense hatred was fueled, a brilliance of maneuver and purpose which totally out-classed Lewin and Spoiler. Still, Fate didn't want the evening's events to end properly. They ended in a near-war. Bodies were hurtled through the air. It ended the way it had to end.

Strongbow Counted Out In Horrible Revenge Match

BY STEVE FARHOOD

NEW YORK, N.Y.—Chief Jay Strongbow carries the X-rays of his leg in his wallet. They serve as a constant reminder of the night Greg Valentine broke his leg with a figure-four leglock.

The two enemies have traveled a lot of roads together. Bloody roads. Ferocious roads. This was another of them. A strap match. One of the worst types of match devised by man. "I'm not afraid of that swine," Valentine boasted.

TREMENDOUS BATTLE

Valentine backed his words with action. So did Strongbow. They assaulted each other with everything they possessed.



Jay Strongbow lies on the outside of the ring, unable to continue his battle against Greg Valentine. The Chief vows revenge in a return bout.

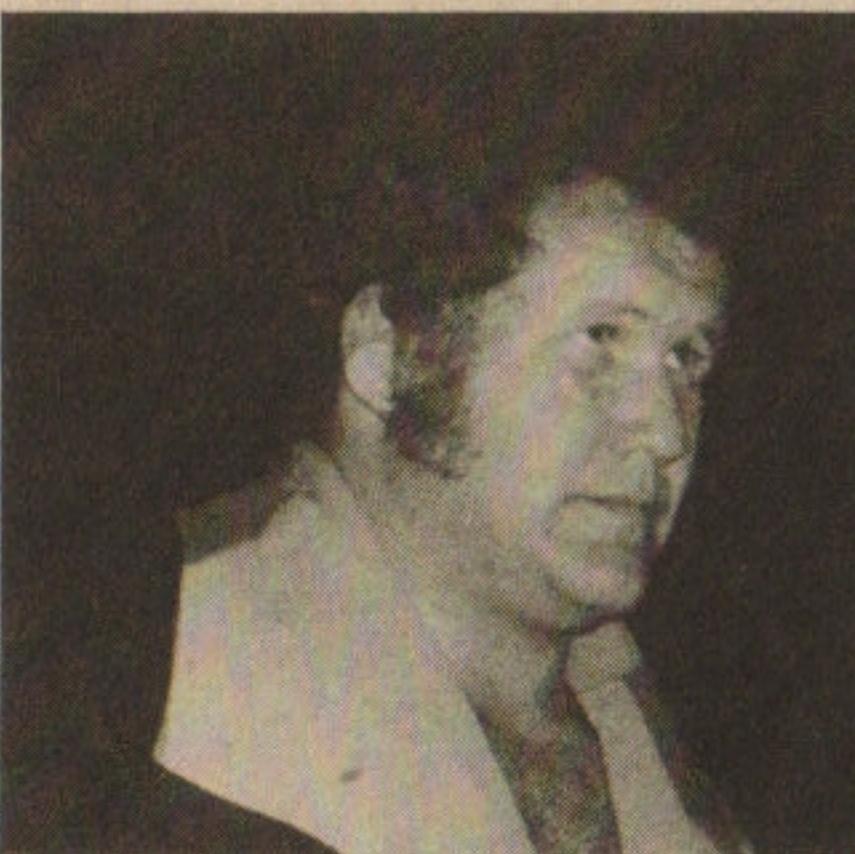
Suddenly, it was over. Strongbow will continue his assaults until that one night he is avenged.

Race Turns Back Brisco For 750th Title Defense

BY DAN SHOCKET

WEST PALM BEACH, FLA.—Seven hundred and fifty defenses. Seven hundred and fifty times NWA champion Harley Race has put his life and title on the line against challengers. He's met them all. Good and bad. Big and small. Fast and strong. He's backed down from no one.

Against former champion Jack Brisco, Race showed why he's held the title since February 1977.



NWA champion Harley Race prepares to meet the challenge of Jack Brisco. It was the 750th defense for Race.

He combined strength and agility. He never flinched. He showed remarkable courage.

That's why they call him champion.

AROUND THE GLOBE

SEATTLE, Wa.

Roddy Piper's victory string goes to 24 straight in Northwest battles

TOKYO, Japan

Super Destroyer and Baba the Giant nearly kill each other in a terrifying battle seen by almost 20,000 fans

NEW ORLEANS, La.

Mr. Wrestling II continues as North American champion with an impressive win over Baron Krupp

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn.

Jim Brunzell leaves the AWA and partner Greg Gagne to campaign in Mid-Atlantic rings

LOS ANGELES, Ca.

The Twin Devils remain an unbeatable tag team combination

BOSTON, Mass.

Bulldog Brower nearly destroys the Boston Gardens arena during a very controversial match

GREENSBORO, N.C.

John Studd and Ken Patera defend the Mid-Atlantic tag team title, but many experts feel this duo is doomed

SAN FRANCISCO, Ca.

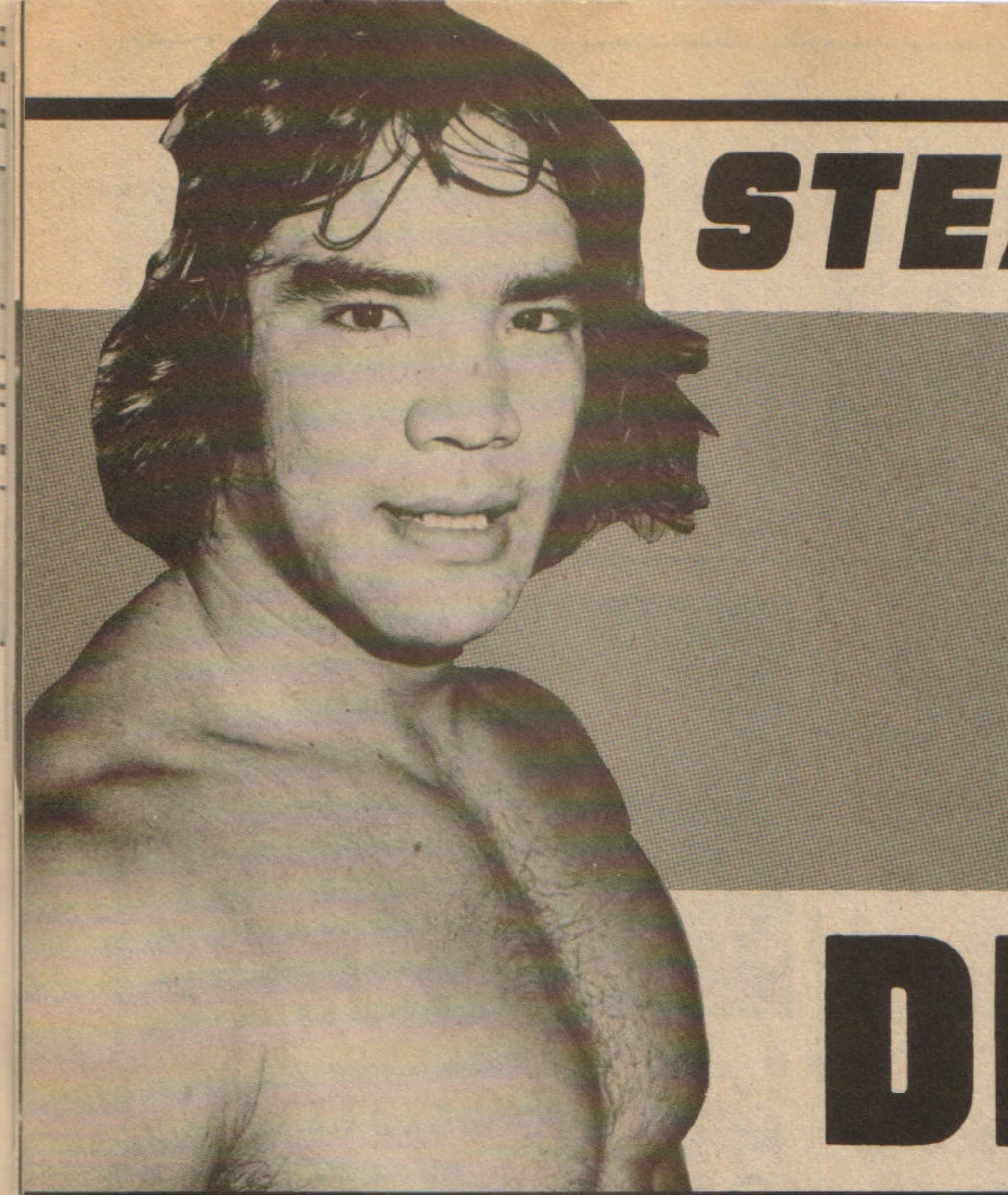
Eddy Mansfield and Chavo Guerrero continue their bloody feud

MEMPHIS, Tenn.

Experts claim Jerry Lawler's days as a fan favorite are numbered

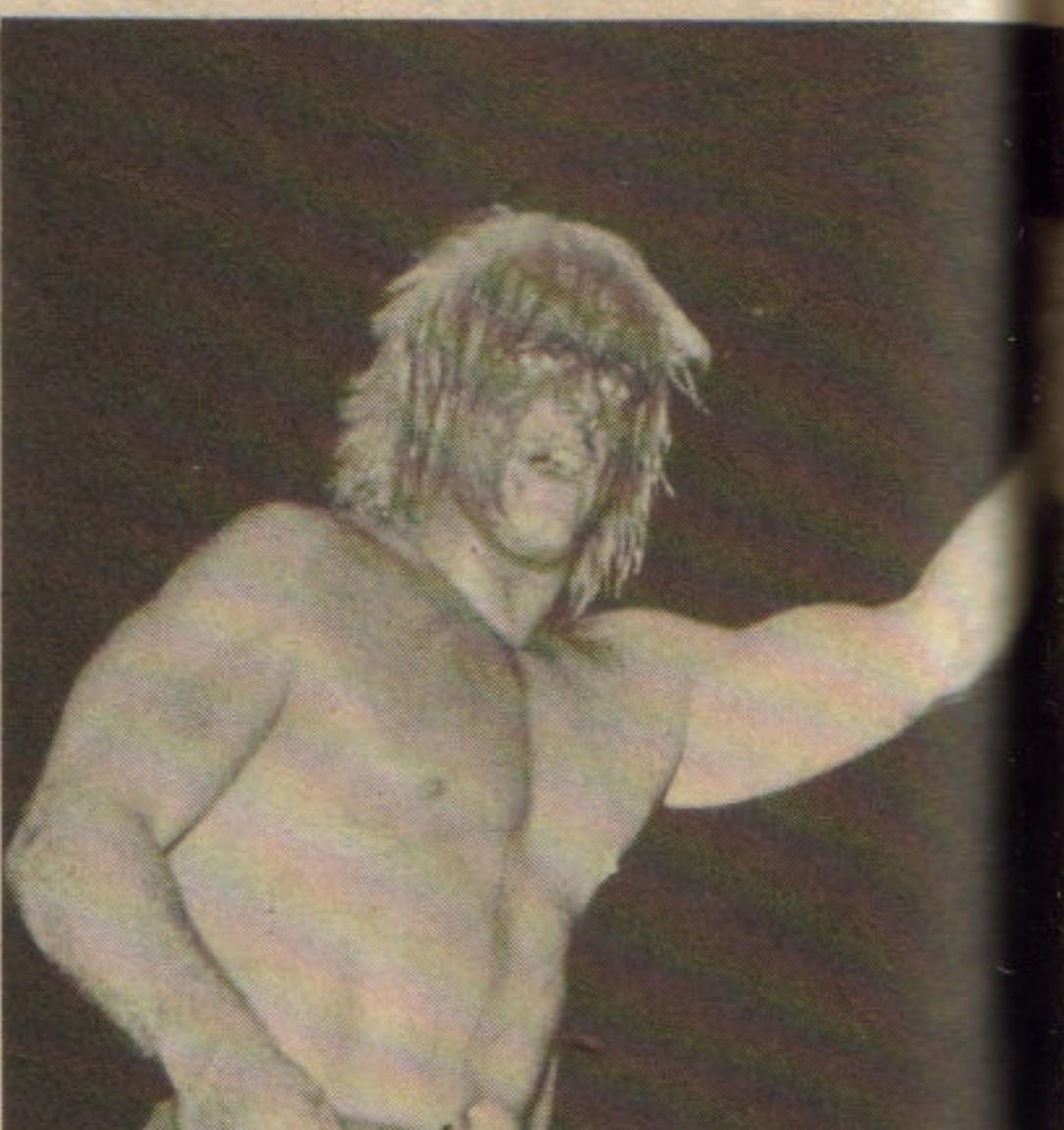
TAMPA, Fla.

Eddie Graham puts son Mike on a two year crash program to win the NWA championship



STEAMBOAT WILL TAG IT END DISAG

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER



TOO MUCH HATRED is lodged in their guts. Memories of past brutalities tear at their souls. At their minds. At their hearts.

There is too much of their past weighing far too heavily on the present to allow much speculation about a promising future.

Ric Flair and Ricky Steamboat are a tag team. They are joined by mutual contempt. They don't trust each other.

"They worked well that

The oddest of partners—Ric Flair and Rick Steamboat—bloodied but victorious (right). Will this pair remain true, or will one turn on his unsuspecting partner?

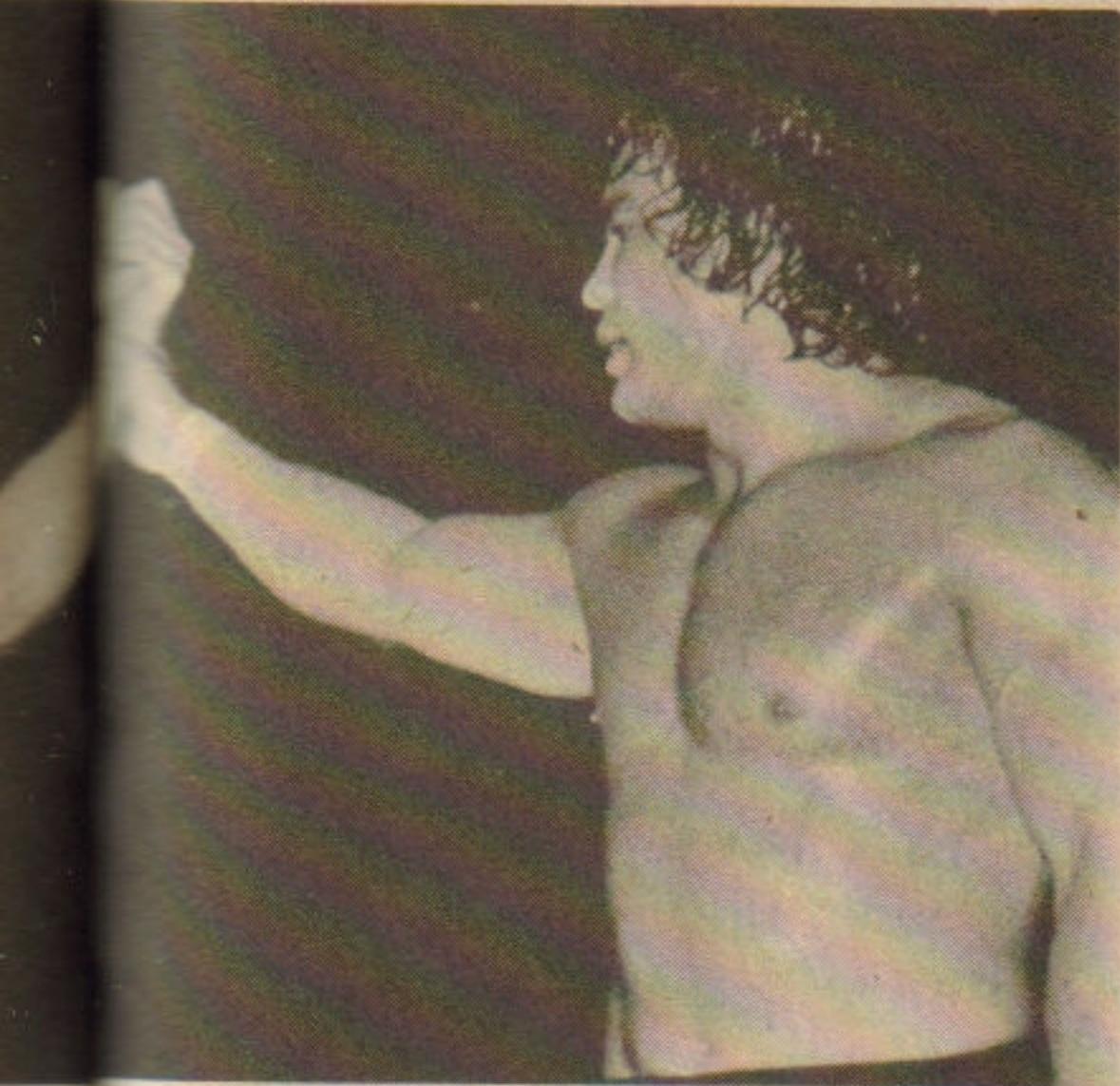
night against Jones and Von Raschke," Flair said. "Steamboat didn't try anything."

"Yeah, it was strange getting in the same ring with Flair," Steamboat said, shrugging. "I had one eye in back of me, waiting. But it went well. That night."

That night. For one night, they formed a dazzling tag

Truly, an extraordinary event. A moment that will forever live in wrestling history. Two men, pledged to destroy each other, clasp hands in brotherhood and form a deadly duo. Rick Steamboat and Ric Flair!

SPAT & FLAIR: THIS TEAM IN ISTER?



team. They paired their immense skills and channeled them into a cohesive, impressive force. For one night.

What matters is the whys

and the hows of this tag team. Both men insist it was formed for purely practical reasons.

"I wanted to dump Jones and Von Raschke and walk away with their belts," Flair said. "I wanted the best partner around and Steamboat was it."

"I hate Jones and Baron much as Flair does," Rick said. "Hey, I'm not marrying Flair. We're just partners."

In wrestling, your partner is like your wife. You must be able to retain your individuality, yet still mesh, compromise, work together and trust.

"Flair put up money to ensure he wouldn't blindside

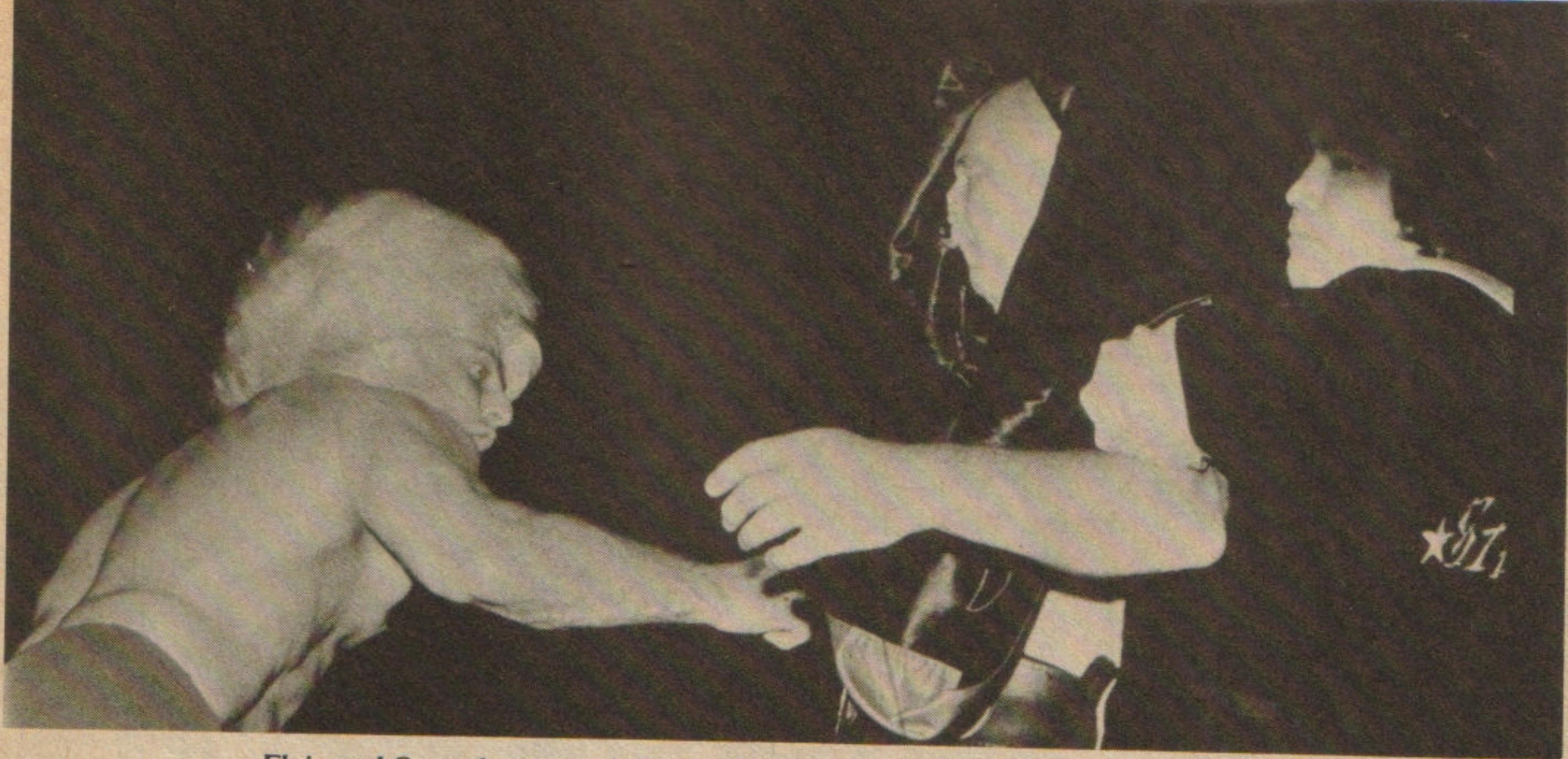
me," Steamboat said. "A guy like Flair doesn't like to spend his dough. So when he put up ten grand, I knew he had to be sincere."

But it was a risk. A big risk. On both sides.

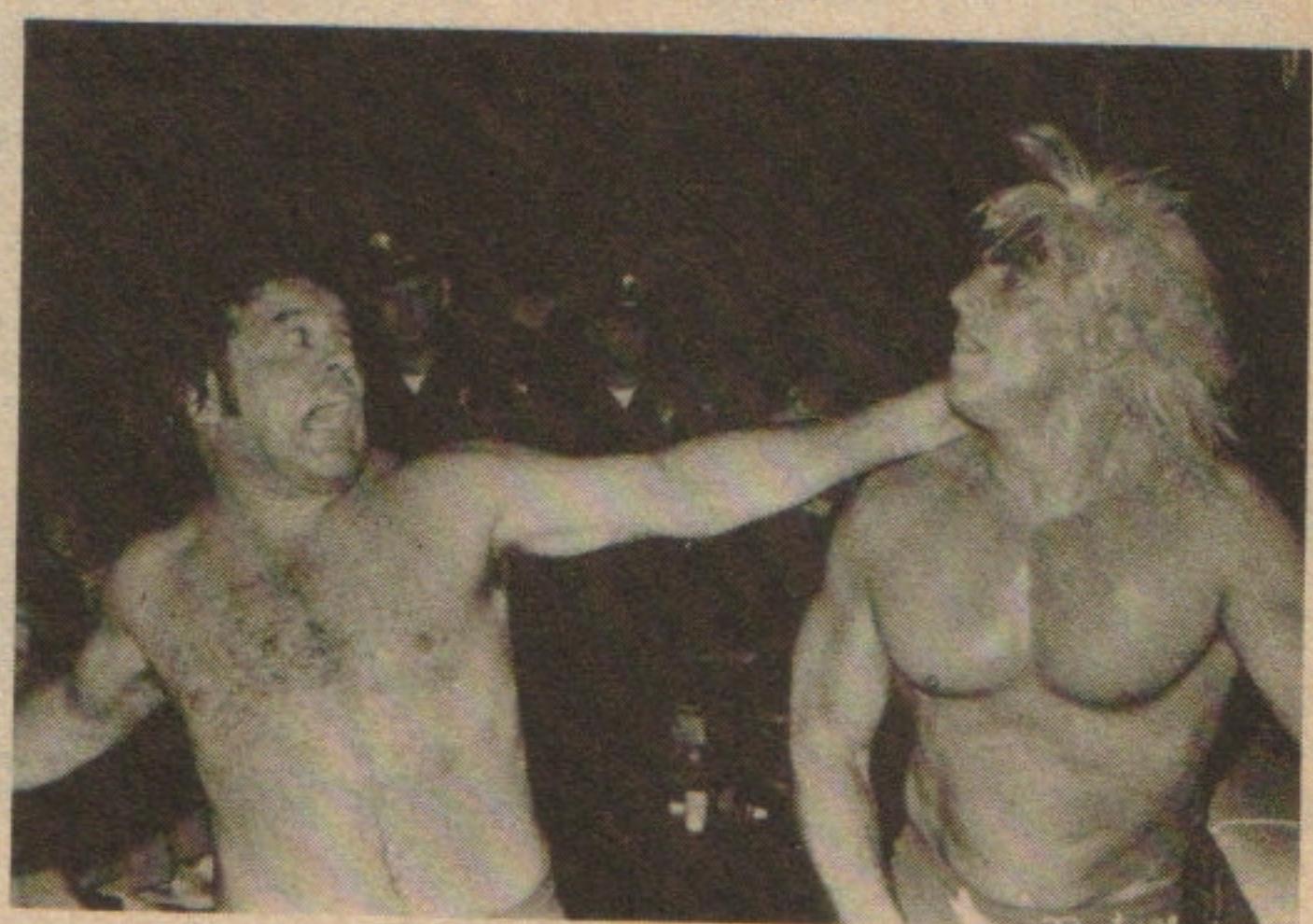
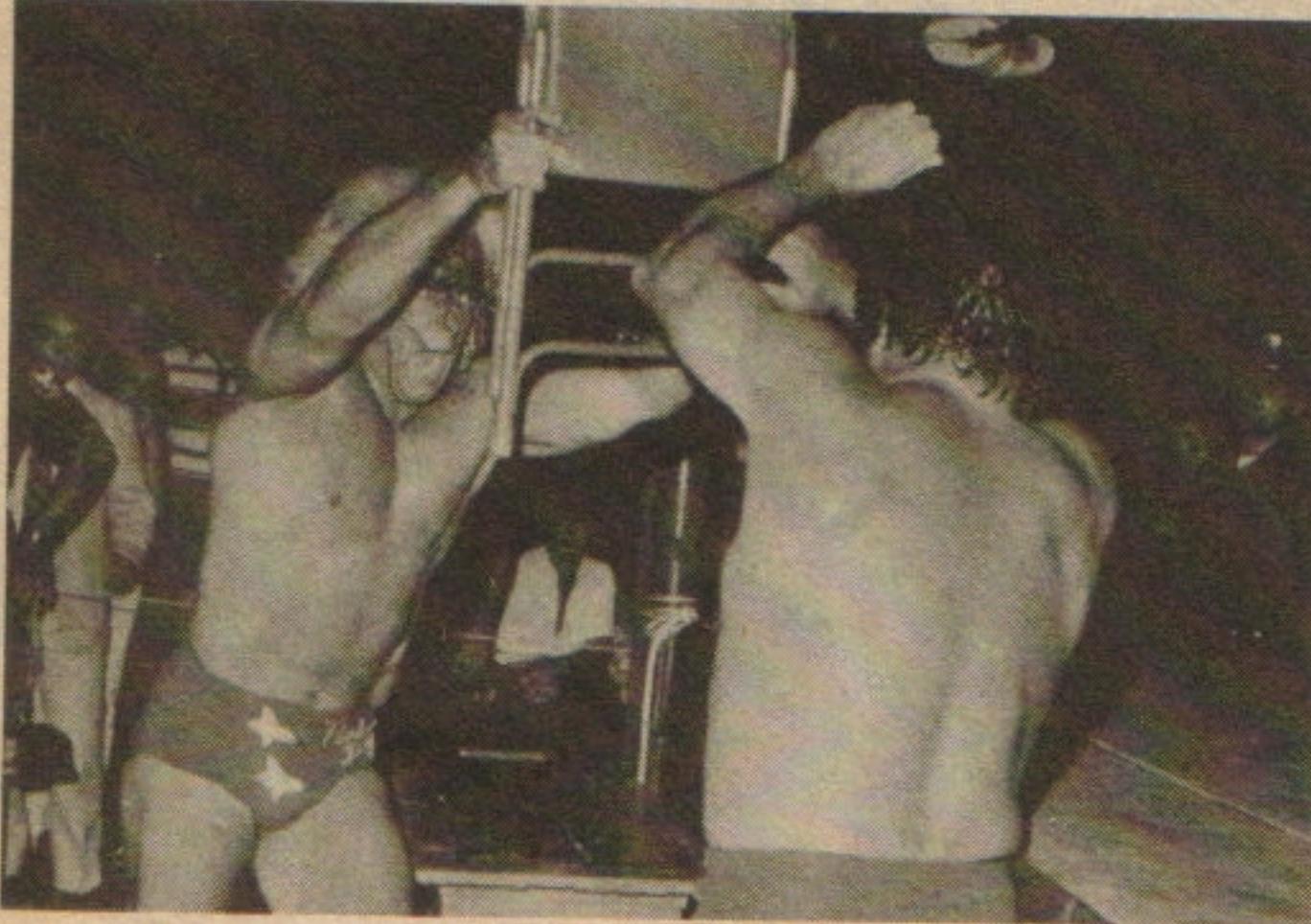
"Rick has said how much he hates me," Flair said. "I know at one time he'd like to have cut me open like a stuck pig. Still, every time I reached for his help, he came through."

"Flair performed like a real gentleman," Steamboat commented. "I have no complaints about his work. Only thing is, we didn't win the title."

And they won't stop until they do. Here is where the



Flair and Steamboat sneak-attack arch-enemy Baron Von Raschke before the bell rings (above). Von Raschke's partner, co-champion Paul Jones winds up and punches Flair (below right). Flair uses a chair to fight back (below left).



future enters into the picture. Assume that Flair and Steamboat are able to push aside their differences for a while. Assume that they can work together. Such assumptions ignore the obvious.

At some point, their immense hatred will surface. It has to. It has nowhere else to go.

"I don't look at Flair as my enemy when I'm working with him," Steamboat said. "He's my partner and that's that."

"Not one time did I have the temptation to bash his face in. Not once," Flair said.

Their words are tinged with

hostility. It is as if they are dazed by it all, unable to believe that a hated foe is their partner.

"Flair's just a dude," Steamboat said.

"Rick's a good wrestler," Flair conceded.

From opposite ends of the spectrum, their stubborn ideologies emerge. Steamboat is guided by concepts of right and wrong. Flair is guided by wrong and right.

Some experts in the Carolinas feel that the unpredictable tag team pairing is the first step toward Steamboat's ultimate conversion to rulebreaking.

"Don't make me laugh," Steamboat said disgustedly.

Even if Steamboat doesn't drift into the Flair camp, is he losing faith among his fans? How can fans believe him when he screams insults at Flair? How can fans trust Rick Steamboat to defend against evil?

"Fans have to trust me. I know what I'm doing and I'm not any different," said Steamboat. "I haven't changed my outlook on life. Fans shouldn't worry."

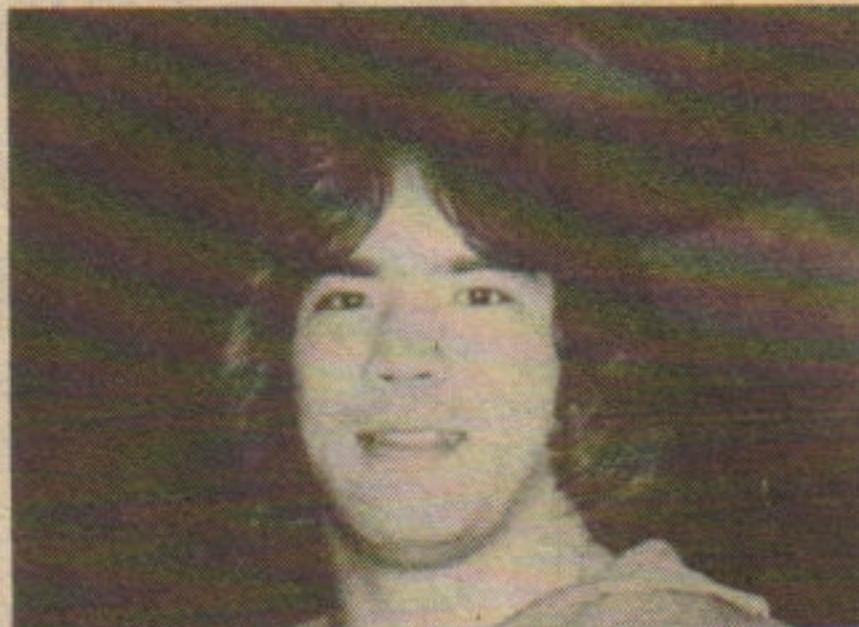
They do. They stop and wonder if Rick Steamboat has deserted them for a belt of gold. □

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

Every month, our reporters will compile wrestlers' most revealing quotes. Often catching the grapplers with their guards down, our reporters will work endlessly in obtaining interesting quotes on a variety of subjects

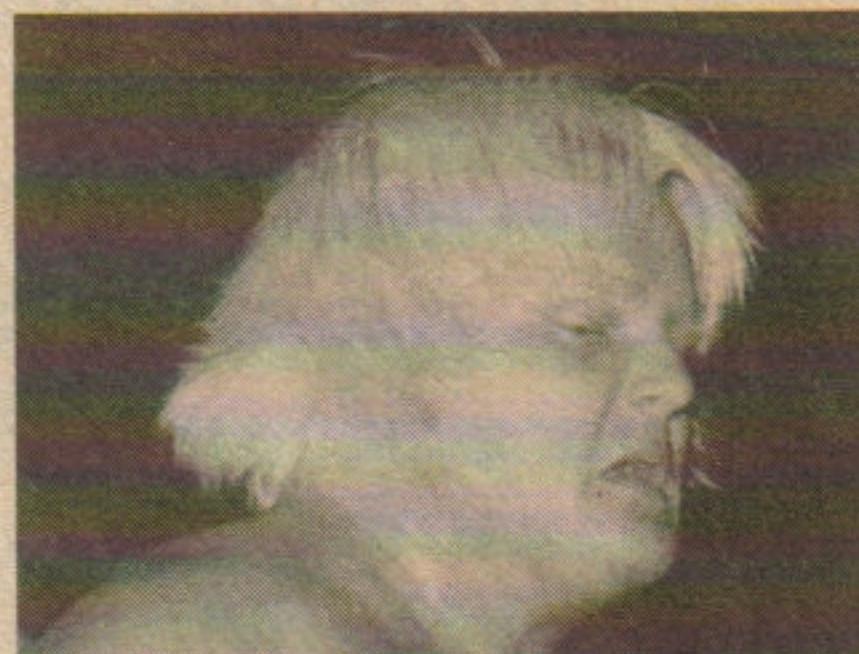
RICK STEAMBOAT

"Fans confuse ideology with morality. What I mean, simply, is that you gotta bend and compromise a little if you're to attain your goals in life. It's nice to come across a white knight on a horse, but if you keep that up, more often than not, you'll fall off and never reach your heights."



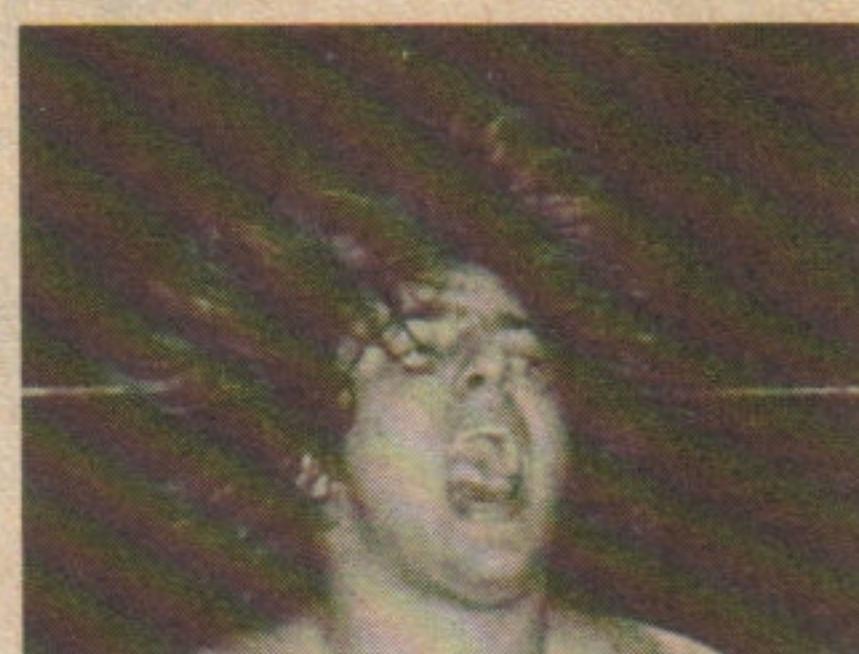
GREG VALENTINE

"The WWF bores me. I went in there thinking there would be some competition and look what I find. Brittle fossils who break as soon as I touch 'em. I need someone who can at least give me a tussle. The best they got over there is Bob Backlund. You know a federation is in serious trouble when Backlund is the champ."



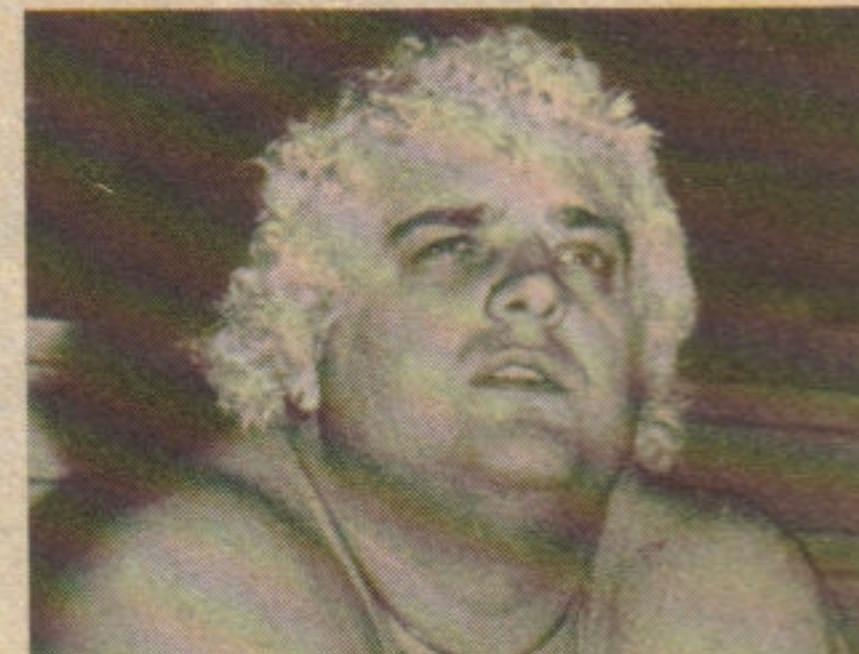
GINO HERNANDEZ

"Family dynasties sicken me. These kids are born with silver spoons in their little mouths and they never know what it's like to break their backs and struggle to make it. Daddy or Big Brother does it all for them. Creeps like the Von Erich boys would fall apart without their poppa."



DUSTY RHODES

"I care about my fellow wrestler. When I see someone who I know is good and decent in trouble, then I come to his aid. That's the way I am. Some people call me a fool for that. I think you gotta have a bond between friends or else the sport goes down the tubes."



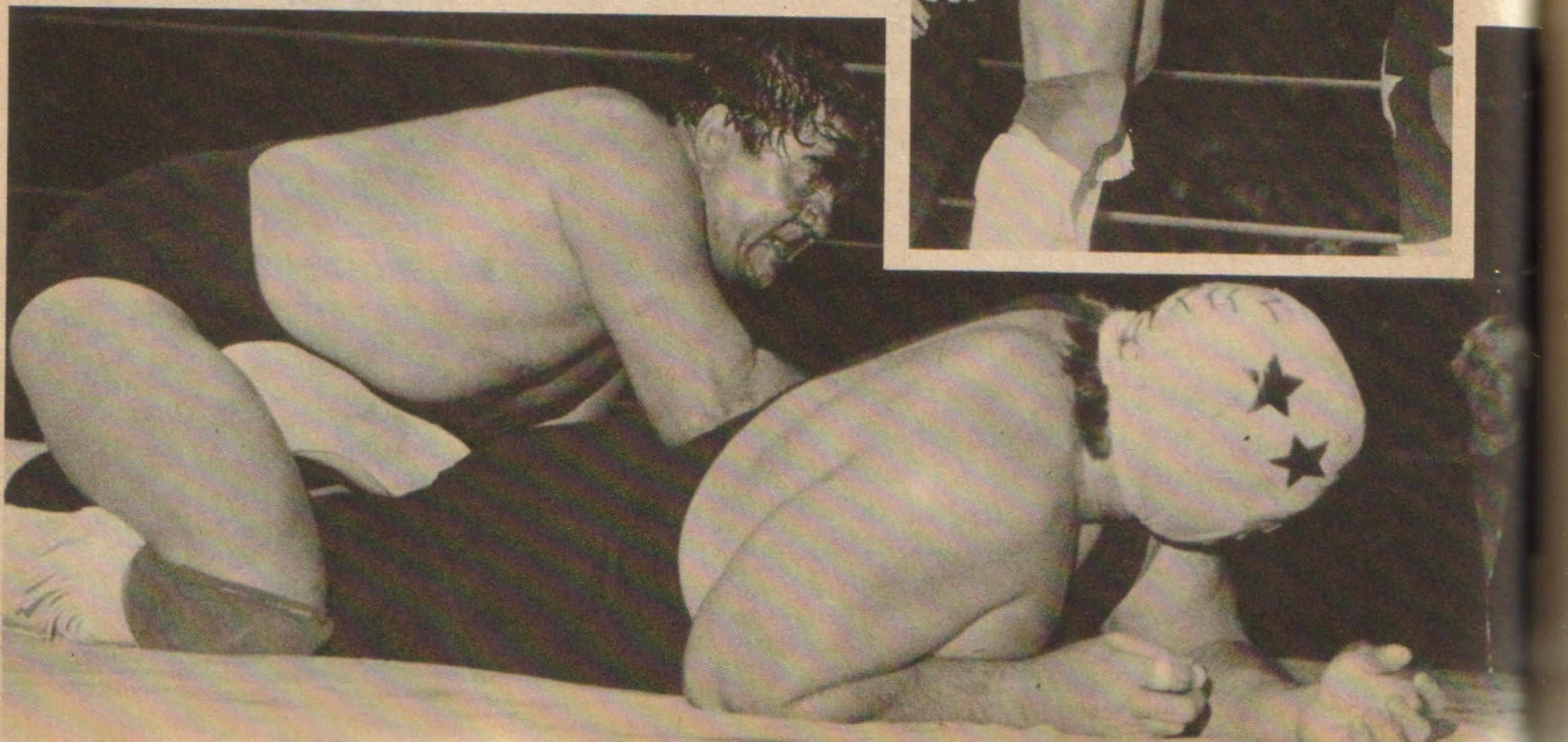
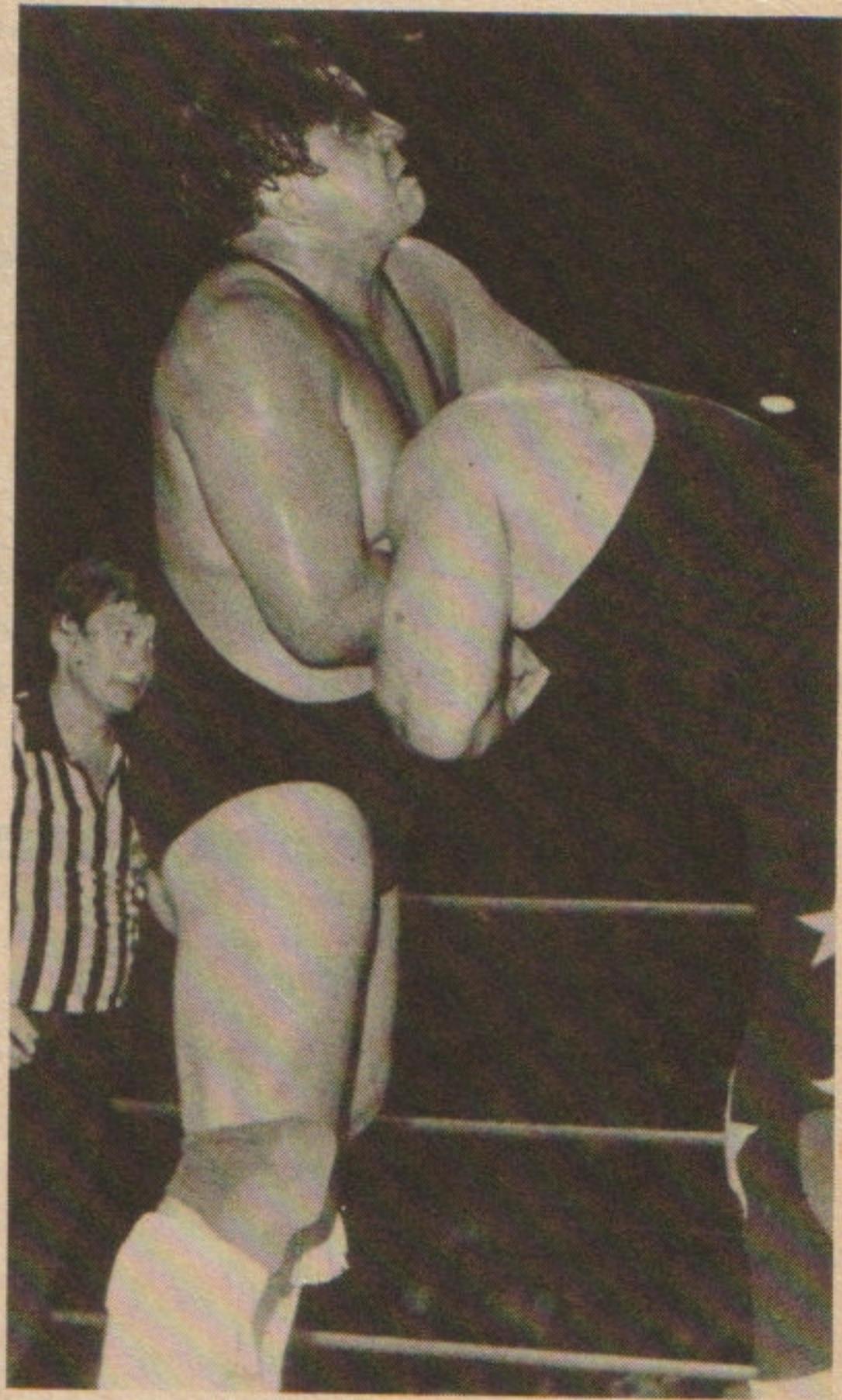
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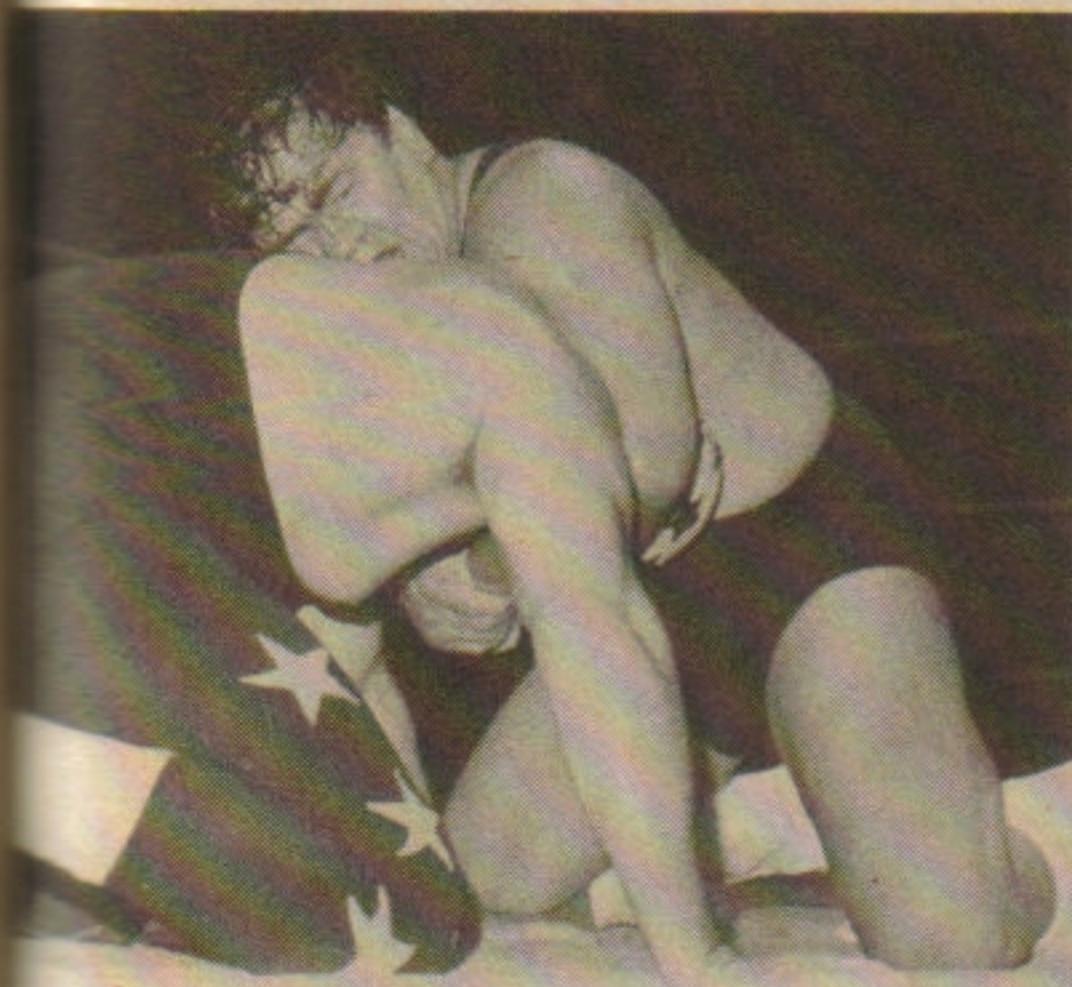
THE DO TORME SUPER

PHOTOS BY MAGGIE ADKINS

He is a deeply troubled man. Fans forget that behind the mask resides flesh and blood. Masked Superstar is the man. He pains. He refuses to reveal his hurt. However, reporter Matt Brock learned the truth



DUBTS THAT ENT MASKED STAR

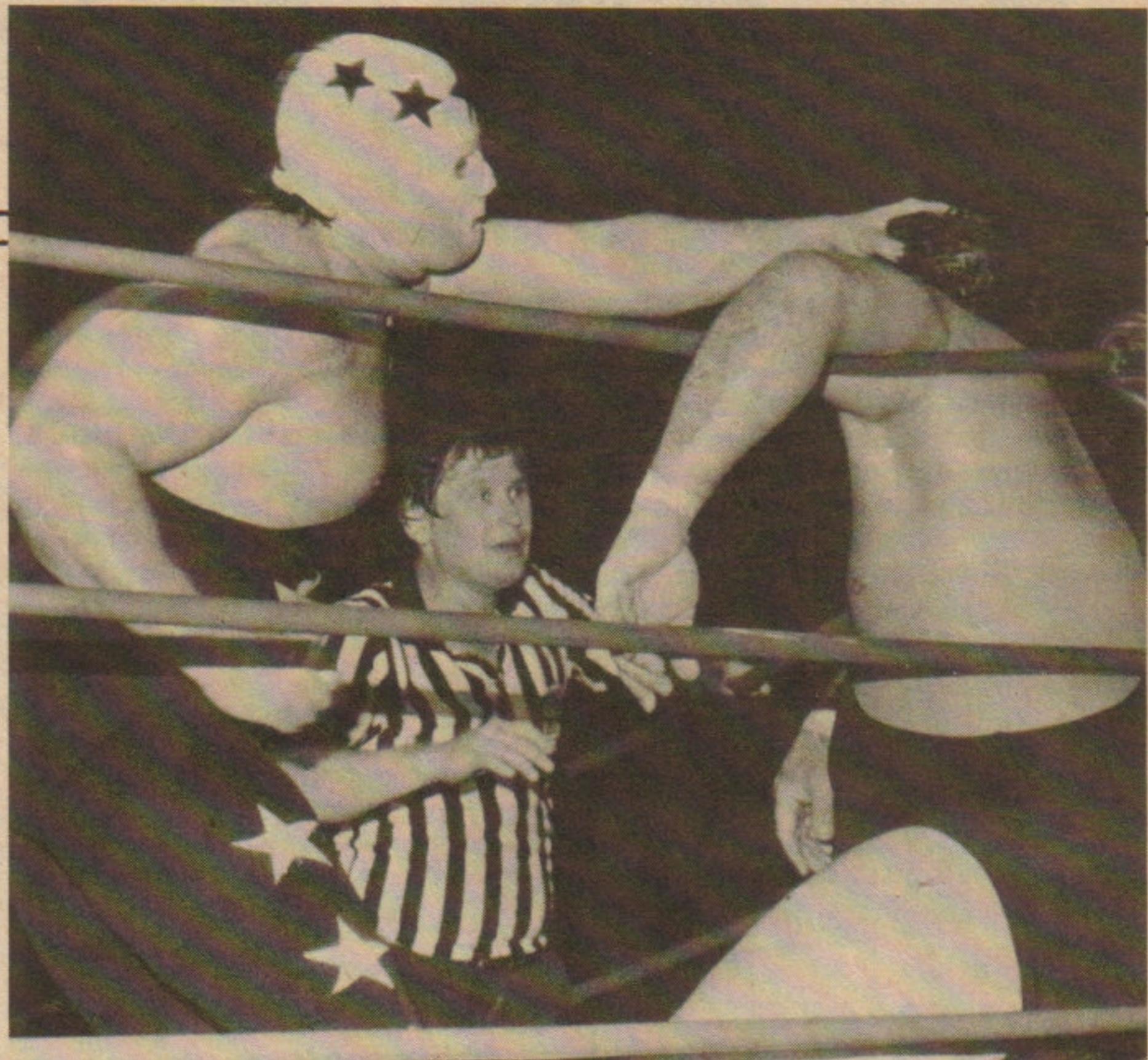


The popular Wahoo McDaniel wins the Georgia championship from the hated Masked Superstar (left, above and right). Superstar is a deeply troubled man.

BY MATT BROCK

I RARELY HAVE much sympathy for someone like Masked Superstar. I'm no prude. I've got the lines and shrunken liver to prove it. Most guys have a sob story. A dame. A manager. A bottle. After decades on the beat, they all sound the same.

Even an old dog can learn new tricks. I'm an old dog. The new trick is the pain and suffering of Masked Superstar. He's got a problem. A big problem. Thinking about it, I wonder if he can solve it.



I rattled a few cubes when I heard Wahoo McDaniel won the Georgia heavyweight title from Superstar. Inside the masked man's head, something warmer was brewing. He was stunned. He was angry. He was ashamed.

He'd spent his life on boasts. Many were empty. He began to doubt himself. Began to wonder if he had what it took. He had no one. No family. No friends. Fans hated him. He hated back. All he had was his dream.

McDaniel took that from him. Shattered the dream. Scattered

the little pieces throughout Superstar's soul. All he had was gone. The envious jeers of the crowd were gone.

Nothing hangs so heavily as the term "former champion." It tugged and pulled on Superstar. Behind the ominous mask, anguish took root.

A vacuum can be a horrible home. Without warmth, without a reason to awaken, a man can slowly die. Inside, Superstar is wasting away. His torment is unnerving. He wonders how he can recover.

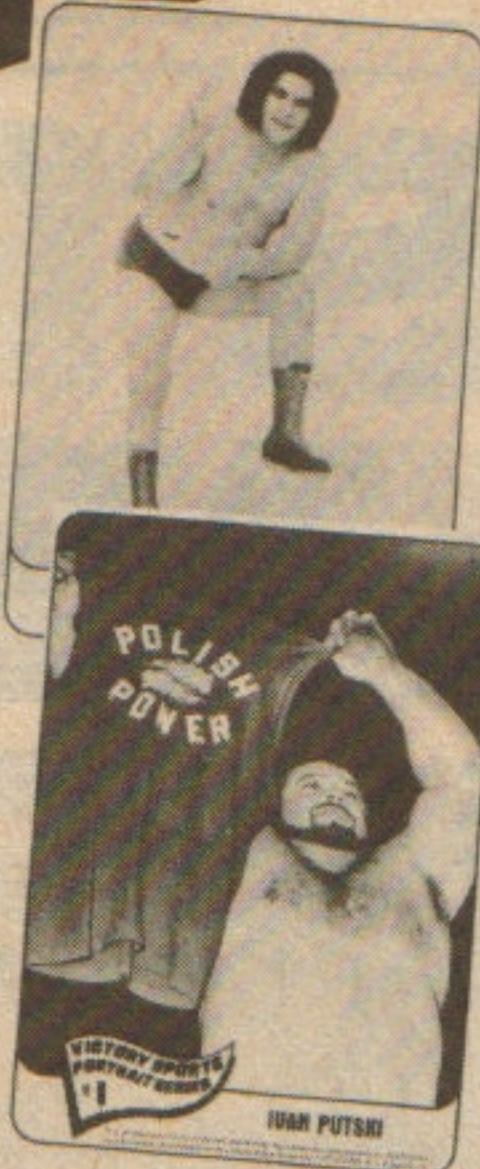
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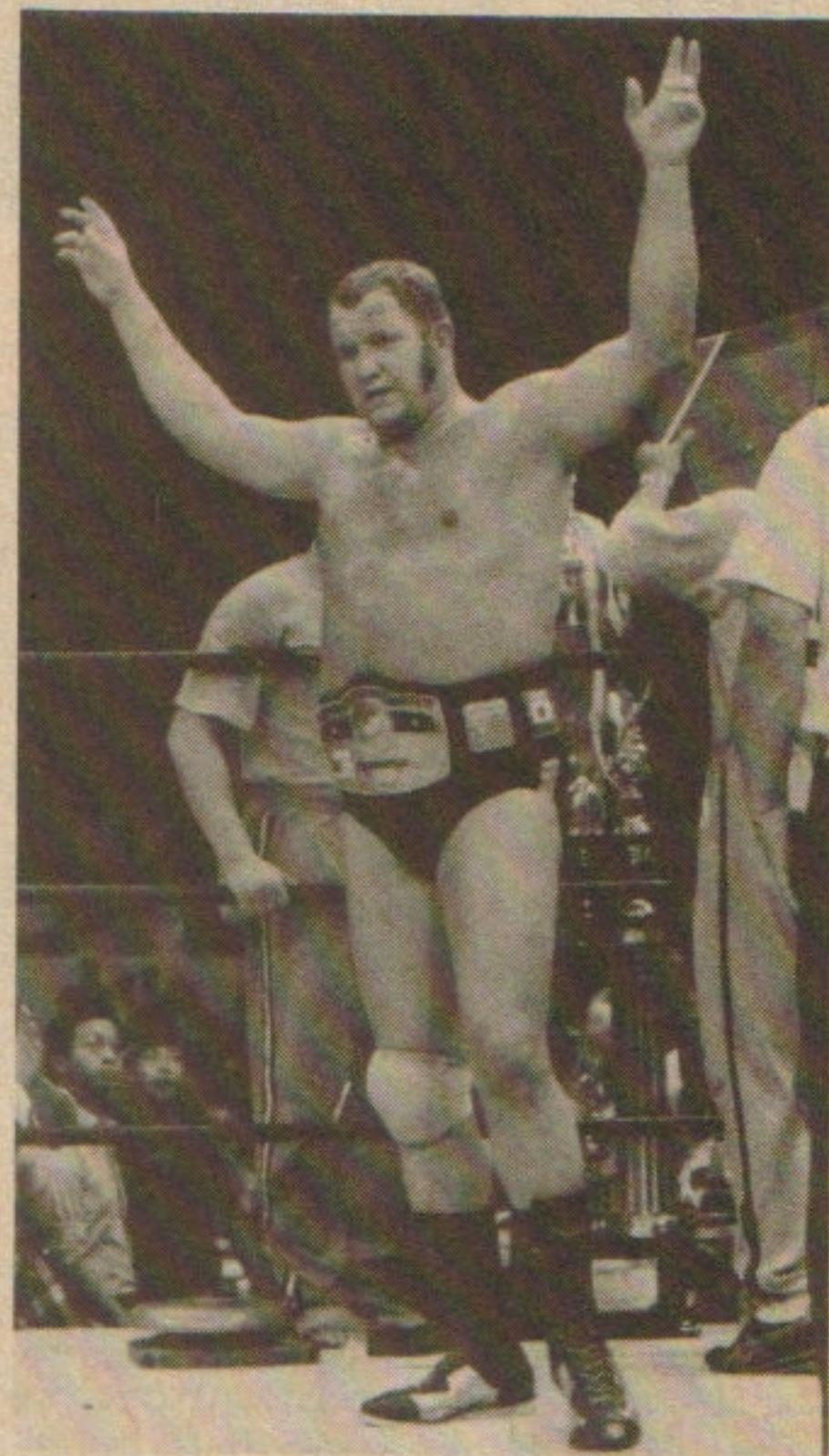
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ON ASSIGNMENT

(Continued from Page 8)

"It's really my only way of relaxing," the champ said. "All I feel is the sun baking my body. All I smell is the salt water. And all I hear is the soothing country western music on my radio. Sure beats having some scientific grappler try and take my damn head off!"



The king reigns supreme. Harley Race is victorious after another NWA title defense.

As we were sunning, I kept a close eye on Race (of course my glasses were off and I could barely see the sand). He really seemed at peace with the world. No fans were bombarding him with insults. No autograph hounds were shoving programs in his face. He was just another beachcomber, catching rays and mellowing out.

I realized how hard it must be for him to enjoy any kind of private life. The demands of being a superstar weigh heavy

(Continued on page 48)

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ON ASSIGNMENT

(Continued from Page 46)

on a man's conscience.

"In my younger days, I was a lot more wild," Race said. "I used to run around a lot. I rode a motorcycle. And me and the boys would sometimes have one brew too many. But these days, I look for the simple things.

"Sometimes it gets frustrating. My chances for being

many would trade places with me. But as long as I have that darn belt, it's all worth it to me."

The other side of Harley Race is frighteningly candid and open. The man has feelings. He hurts and he bleeds. He smiles and he laughs. But most importantly, he is a human being who wants the same



In his younger days, Race enjoyed riding his motorcycle. But today, as he leads the demanding life of a champion, he settles for more simple pleasures and activities. Race is always respected, but not always popular.

alone are so few. You know, being champion means a lot to me. It's really a 24-hour-a-day job. When I'm in awkward situations, I'll ask myself. 'How would a champion act now?' Because of who I am, my life is pretty much planned out ahead of time. I don't have much say in how I spend my time.

"If you ask most Americans to give up their private lives and their spare time, I wonder how

things in life as you and I.

I closed my eyes as the beach grew quiet. Inside my head, all I could hear was the screeching voice of a ring announcer.

"Ladées and gentlemen. Wrestling champion of the world, Harley Race!"

I turned my head to look at Harley. He was sleeping like a little boy, oblivious to the sounds of the waves crushing the shoreline. □

DRESSING ROOM CONFIDENTIAL

(Continued from Page 10)

Imagine, Rick Steamboat teaming with Ric Flair! The full consequences of this tandem is still to be realized. Steamboat's part in this has been deeply analyzed. Some believe him when he insists that this was a purely temporary decision. Others aren't so sure. But it's harder to understand Steamboat linking with Flair. Ric Flair acting friendly to scientific wrestlers in the locker room is astonishing.

He keeps his sharp tongue harnessed. The rulebreaker doesn't provoke. He doesn't insult. In short, he is a model of good behavior.

It won't last.

Another family is being formed. At present, it has only three members.

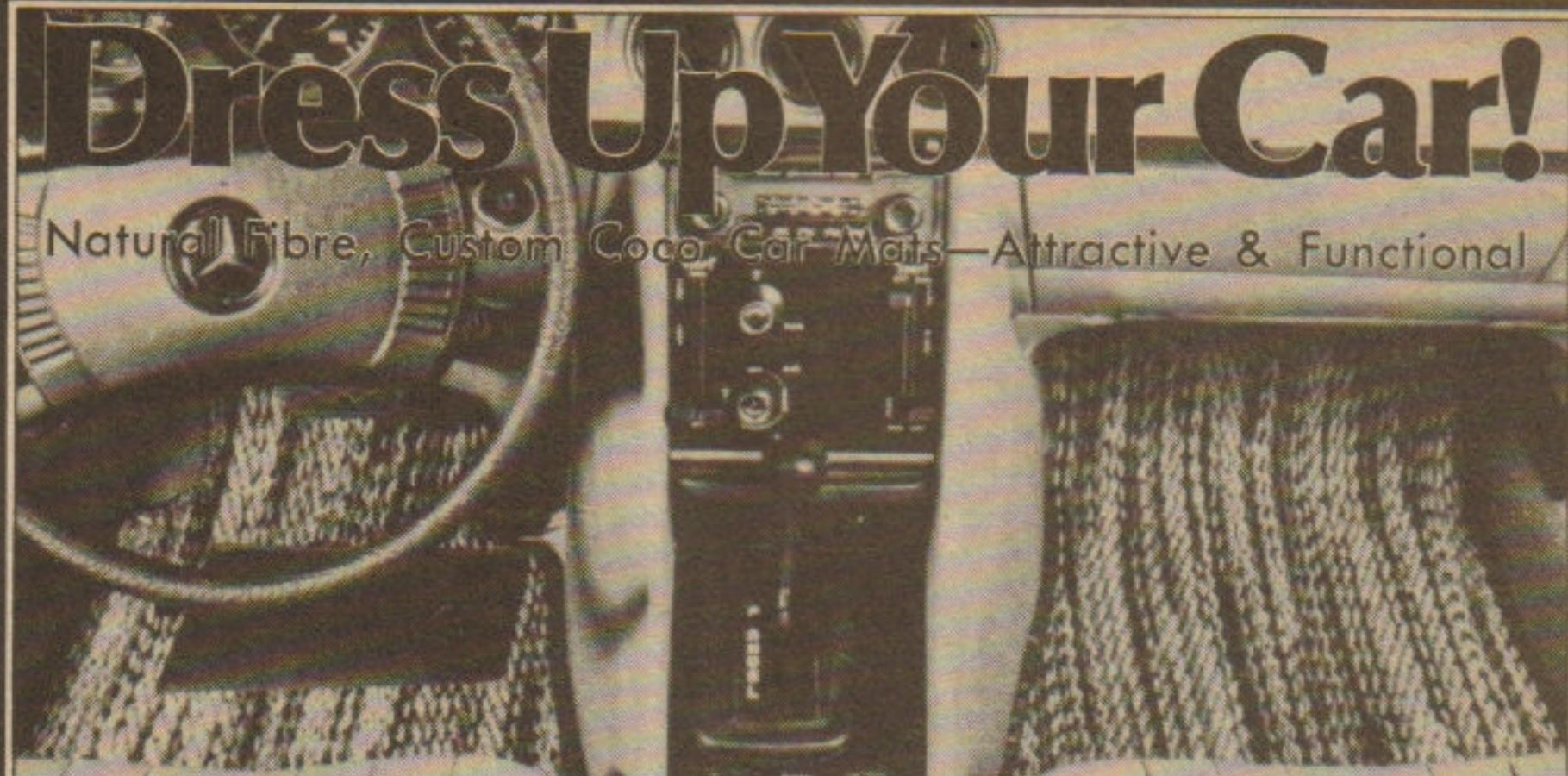


Killer Karl Kox has joined Bobby Heenan's family in Georgia.

Blackjack Lanza. Killer Karl Kox. Masked Superstar.

Yes, the evil masked one has joined Bobby Heenan's army.

(Continued on page 50)



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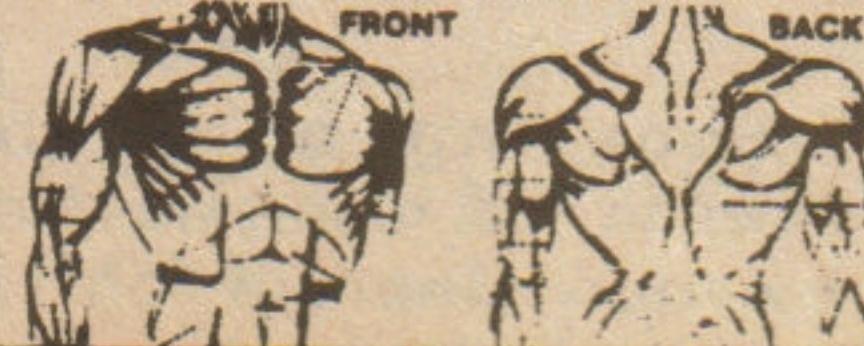
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(Continued from Page 49)



In this picture, Bobby Heenan is at his bragging best. But our Georgia correspondent recently saw a different Heenan — an apologetic, sorry man. But Heenan's letter to AWA President Blackburn was destroyed before it was sent.

"This is a great opportunity for me," said Masked Superstar. "Heenan is a genius. He knows how to get things done. I've always admired his guts and brains.

"I'm tired of the lames who trip over their big toes trying to win a title," Superstar shouted into the locker. "Bobby is brilliant. Look, he made Bockwinkel what he is today."

"Of course, there's a big difference between me and Bockwinkel. I already got the brains and skill. All I need from Bobby is his strategy. Together, we'll whip anyone."

Speaking of Bobby Heenan, this report was filed by our Georgia correspondent B.W. Foreman.

Foreman claims he saw Heenan, huddled in a corner of a Georgia arena, writing a letter. On closer inspection, the letter proved to be an apology to AWA President Stanley Blackburn for Heenan's actions against him. (You may recall, Bobby was tossed out of the AWA after punching President Blackburn during an argument). According to Foreman, the apology letter was filled with "I'm sorrys" and "I promise to never do it again." It must have been quite a comedown for a man of Heenan's pride.

However, that letter will never be sent. Heenan ripped the letter to shreds as soon as he was aware Foreman had seen it.

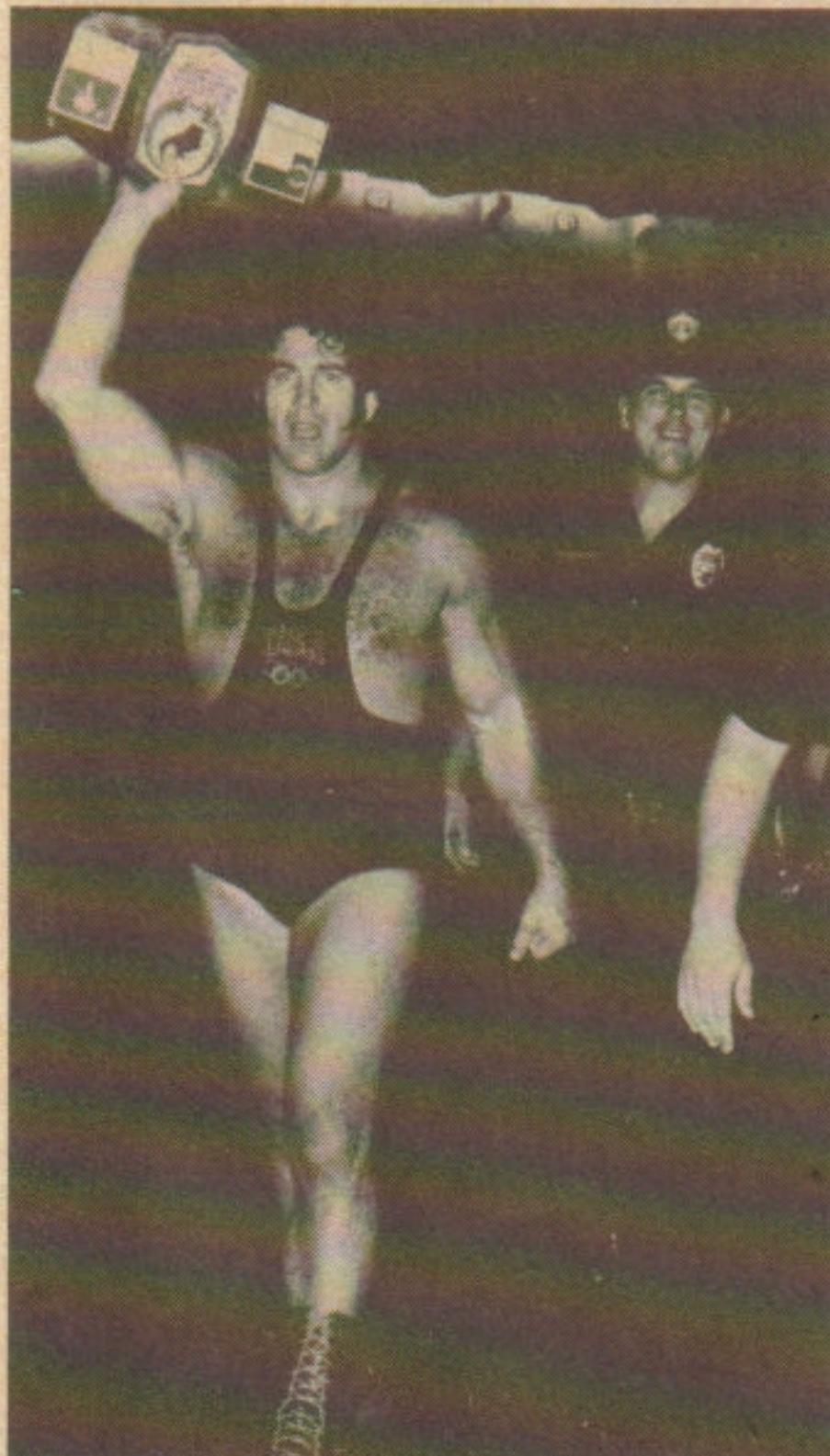
Too bad. We'd have loved to see Heenan crawl. □

RINGSIDE

(Continued from Page 12)

Jones and Baron Von Raschke are holding tight to their NWA tag team belts.

Ken Patera can't believe we would even think that his closest friend and tag team partner, John Studd, would want to wrestle him for the single Mid-Atlantic title. "What is mine is his!" exclaims Patera. "John wouldn't wrestle me for the belt because he is a Mid-Atlantic champion on his own, and he knows it. He doesn't need the individual belt to prove that point.



Ken Patera holds the Mid-Atlantic championship belt aloft. Patera says partner John Studd would never wrestle him for the belt.

"Of course we won't wrestle." Well Ken, we hear that Studd does want the belt and he would gladly wrestle you for it!

What a vicious match of rulebreakers: Bob Orton Jr. took on "Rotten" Randy Savage. The bout wound up a double disqualification...Ronnie Garvin is having fits with the Assassin...Buzz Sawyer is climbing the

(Continued on page 52)

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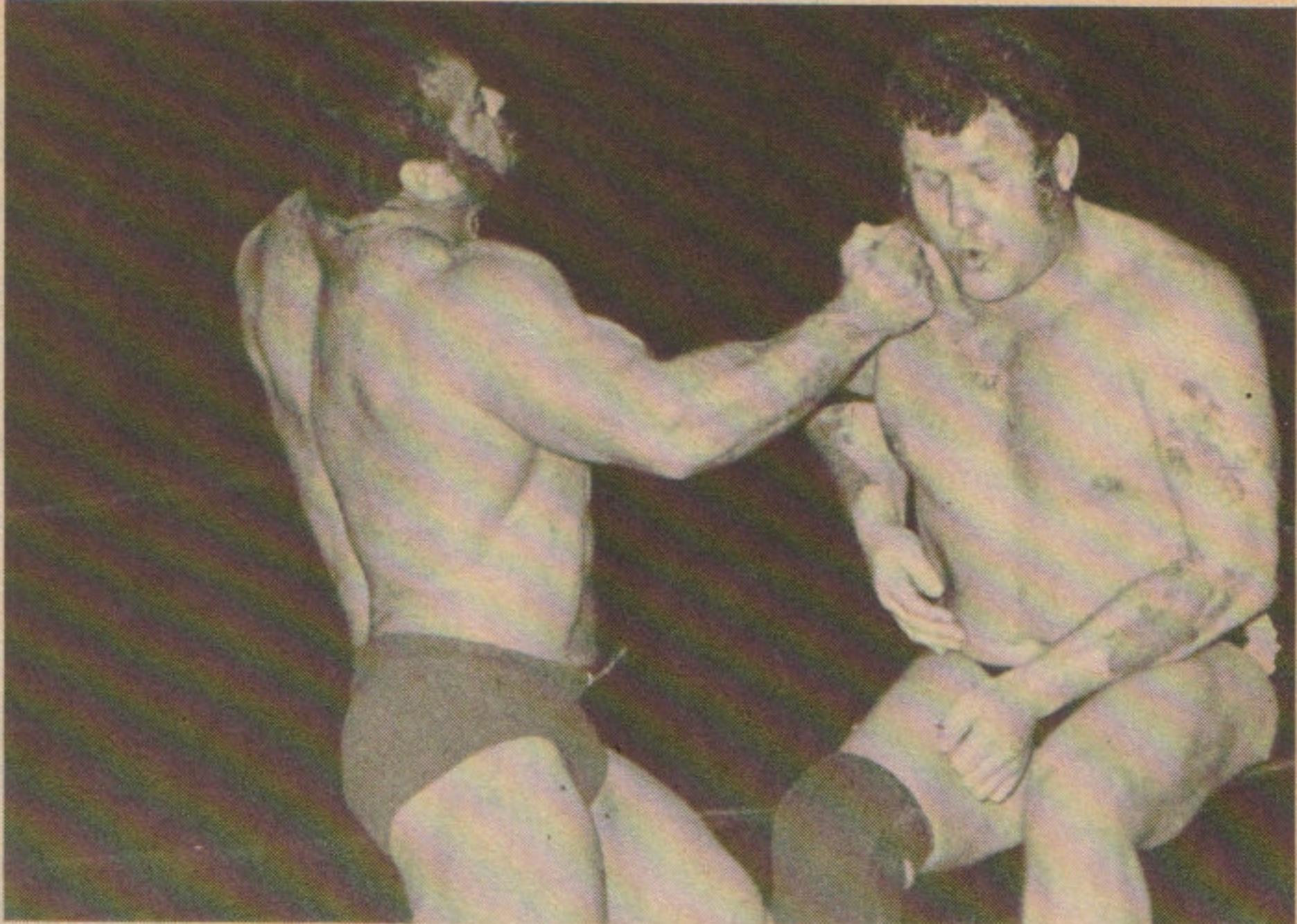
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RINGSIDE

(Continued from Page 51)

Florida ratings ladder . . . Boris Malenko is active in Knoxville, Tennessee . . . Chief Jay Strongbow has not been able to put Greg Valentine in the hospital as yet. But he promises he is just days away from doing so.

The Pacific Coast championship of Roddy Piper was on the line against Stan "The Man" Stasiak. Stan's heartpunch was in perfect form. He knocked Piper senseless and won the championship . . . Veteran Tony Borne is staying



Above: Ivan Putski slugs NWA champion Harley Race. Putski believes he also deserves a shot at Bob Backlund's WWF belt. Below: Johnny Powers wants to win the Martial Arts Championship from Antonio Inoki.



Heartpunch expert Stan Stasiak is the new Pacific Coast champion after a victory over former champion Roddy Piper.

active in the Pacific Northwest . . . Luke Graham was disqualified in an important Oklahoma match against Jerry Oates.

Ivan Putski urges his fans to help him get a title shot against his friend, Bob Backlund. "Write to PWI and demand that they put pressure on the promoters to give me a match against Bob. I want to

win the championship more than anything else, and maybe you fans can help me get the match!"

The despicable team of Ole Anderson and Ivan Koloff have still not won the Georgia tag team belts back from Tommy Rich and Wahoo McDaniel.

Johnny Powers has branched out into martial arts. He is

demanding a match against world martial arts champion Antonio Inoki.

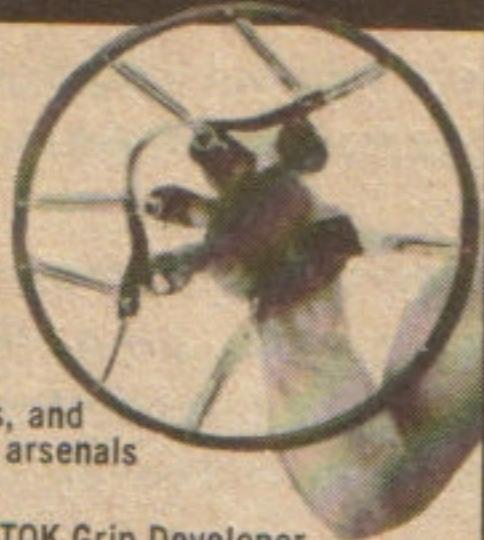
"I'll go anywhere in the world to face Inoki," Powers says. "I admire him and his skills, but he would not stand up against my attacks. His championship is as good as mine the day he signs for the match."

From Ringside, this is Bill Apter. See you next time! □

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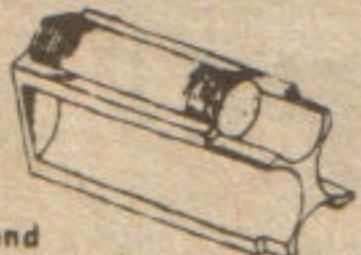
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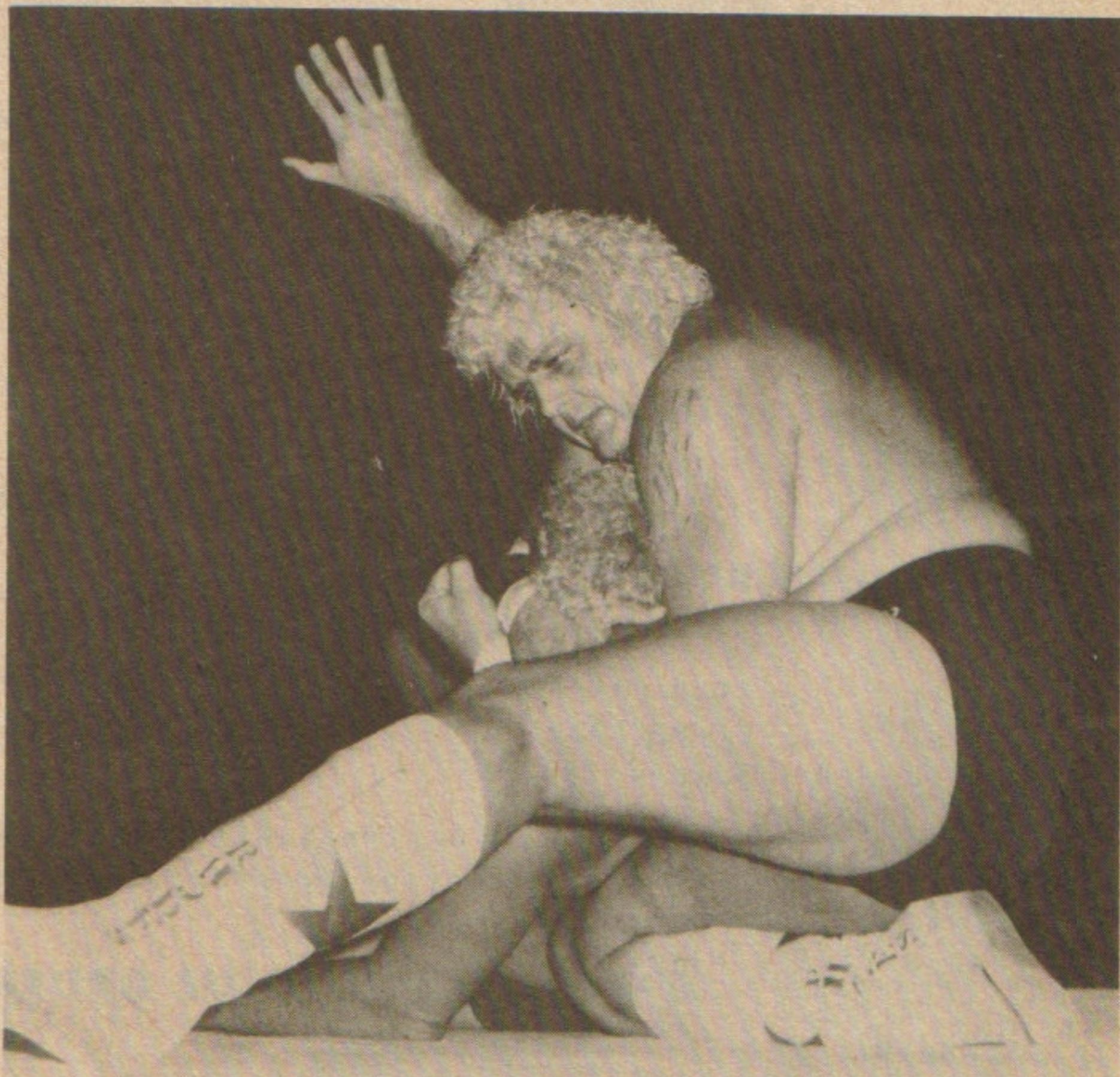
(Continued from Page 18)

Dear Mr. Neckbreaker,

I don't say bad things about Rick Steamboat, I just describe him accurately. If he happens to be clumsy, stupid, dishonest, weak, and annoying, that certainly isn't my fault. And if you can restrain yourself from breaking my neck, I'd appreciate it. By the way, you too can call me. Mr. Shocket.

Dear Brandes,

Dusty Rhodes could be champion today if he didn't care more about the fans than he does about winning. He can prove his abilities not by wrestling me but by winning a title. But he chose to be popular instead of good. Once again, great potential dies at the hands of fan stupidity.



Reader Jay Brandes claims Dusty Rhodes is the greatest wrestler who ever lived. Columnist Dan Shocket believes Rhodes could have been great, but instead he chose to listen to the fans.

Dear Shocket,

Dusty Rhodes is the greatest wrestler who ever lived. He keeps getting better and better. You said since he's become popular with the fans, his skills have deteriorated. That's a lie and you know it. I hope Dusty gets you in the ring and teaches you how good he really is!

JAY BRANDES
Miami Beach, Fla.

Dear Mr. Shocket,

I like watching all of the aggressive wrestlers, men like Harley Race, Ric Flair, Greg Valentine, and Ken Patera. But my favorite aggressive wrestler, Mr. Blackjack Mulligan, changed his style and upset me greatly.

I am still a fan of Mr. Mulligan since I think he will soon realize his mistake of leaving the best of wrestling. I hope Bobby

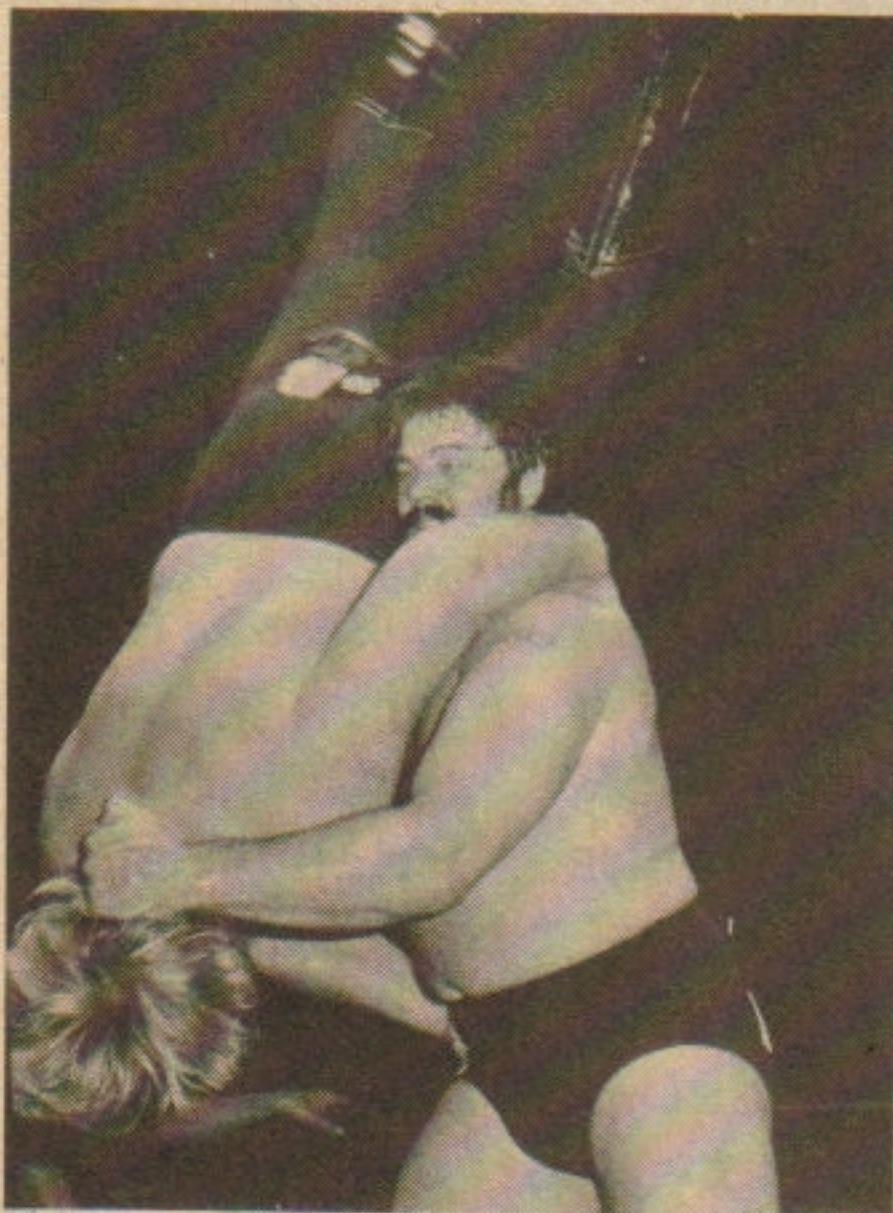
Heenan and Blackjack Lanza and the true fans of Mr. Mulligan will help him see how much his change has hurt everyone.

Mr. Mulligan, think it over. Don't worry about your fans. They'll follow you if they're your true fans!

JACKIE PARISH
King, N.C.

Dear Ms. Parish,

I add your eloquent voice to the many others who have been begging Blackjack Mulligan to reconsider his recent course. We can only hope he listens to reason.



Blackjack Mulligan, a former rulebreaker who turned scientific. Dan Shocket hopes Mulligan switches back.

Dear Dan Shocket,

It's about time someone told the truth about Backlund, Sammartino, and the rest of the so-called good guys. Finally, I'm not the only one who knows they pay off referees to win matches. After reading your first column, I know there will be more of the truth soon!

SCOTT PASCH
North Plainfield, N.J.

Dear Scott Pasch,

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STRONGBOW'S HEADDRESS

(Continued from Page 29)



The colorful and popular Chief Jay Strongbow, wearing his famed Indian headdress.

some wrestlers. Not for me.

"I asked PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED if they would consider a contest with the winner receiving my prized headdress. Thankfully, this fine magazine agreed."

We were delighted to help Strongbow. And amazed when the Chief told us which colorful headdress would be the prize.

"This is my favorite headdress," Strongbow said caressing the feathers. "It is something of a lucky charm for me. It has carried me through some very tough matches."

"I would not dream of parting with it. But I know the fan who finally wins it will have the tenderness

required to take good care of it. I know he will deserve it."

To win the headdress, you must solve the accompanying wrestling puzzle. Find and circle the 20 wrestlers names hidden in this puzzle on page 29. (We've given you a headstart by circling Strongbow's name.) Fill out the entry blank. Be as neat as possible. It does us no good if you win the prize and we can't make out your handwriting.

So print your name and address. Be very neat when circling the names in the puzzle. Then mail it in to us.

Those fans who solve the puzzle will have their entry forms put into a giant drum. Our publisher, Stanley Weston, will draw the grand prize winner out of the drum.

That name will win the headdress. Mr. Weston will then draw 10 more names from the drum. These runners-up will receive an autographed picture of Chief Jay Strongbow.

So there will be 11 winners.

"Too many wrestlers turn their backs on the fans," Jay said. "Some of them won't even sign autographs. That's disgraceful.

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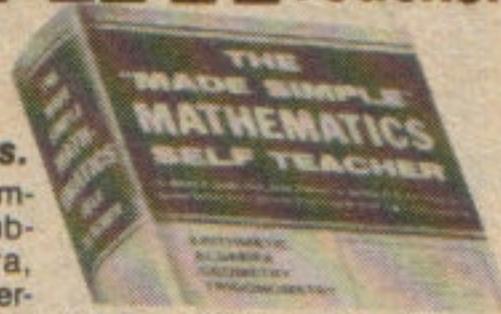
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MORGENSTEIN REPORT

(Continued from Page 27)

KING WORRIED ABOUT SUGAR

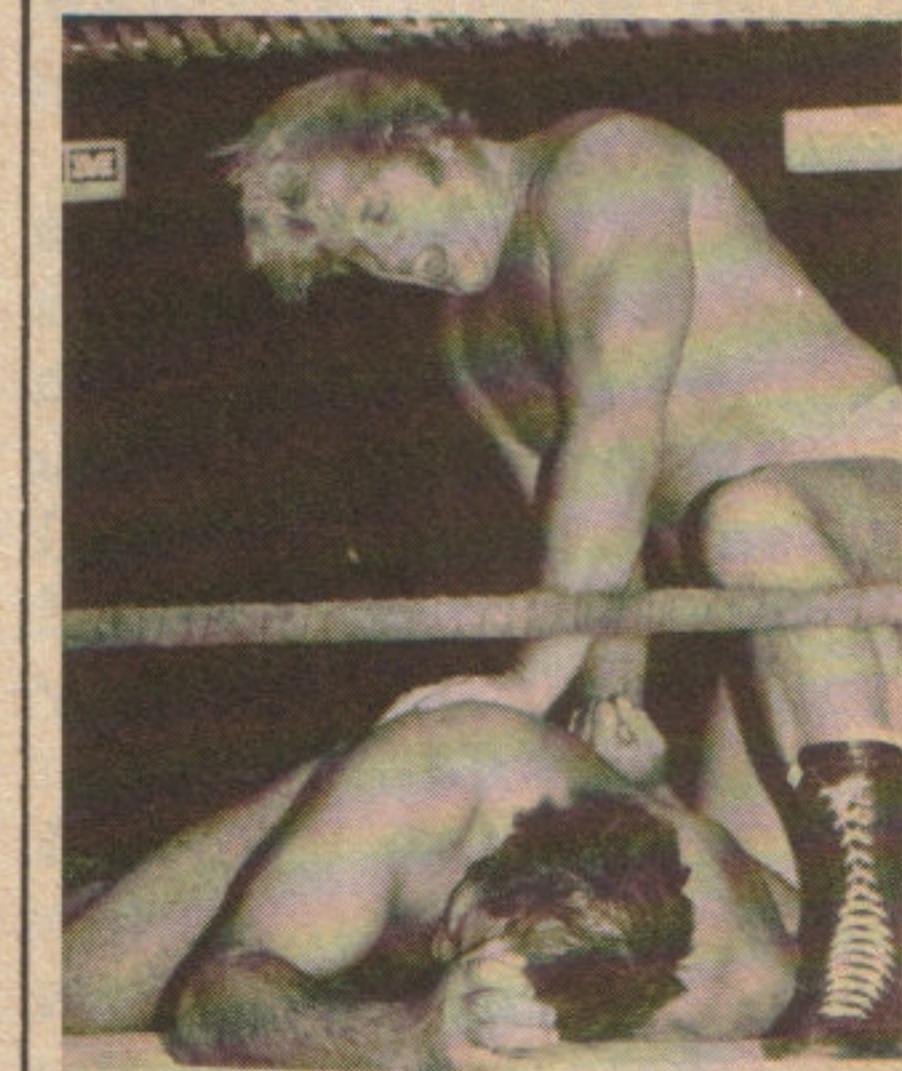
Sonny King says nothing scares him. He says his family owns Florida wrestling and will until the end of time. Privately, King is scared hairless by the

presence of Sweet Brown Sugar, a masked package of aerial strength who has threatened to destroy the King family.



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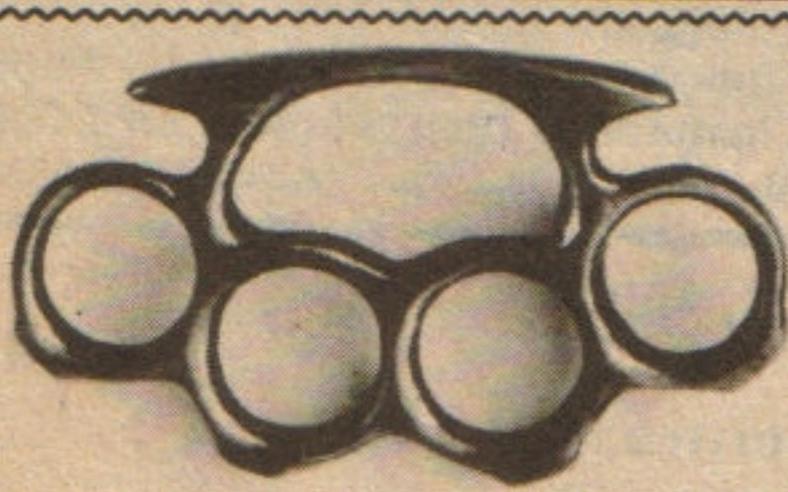
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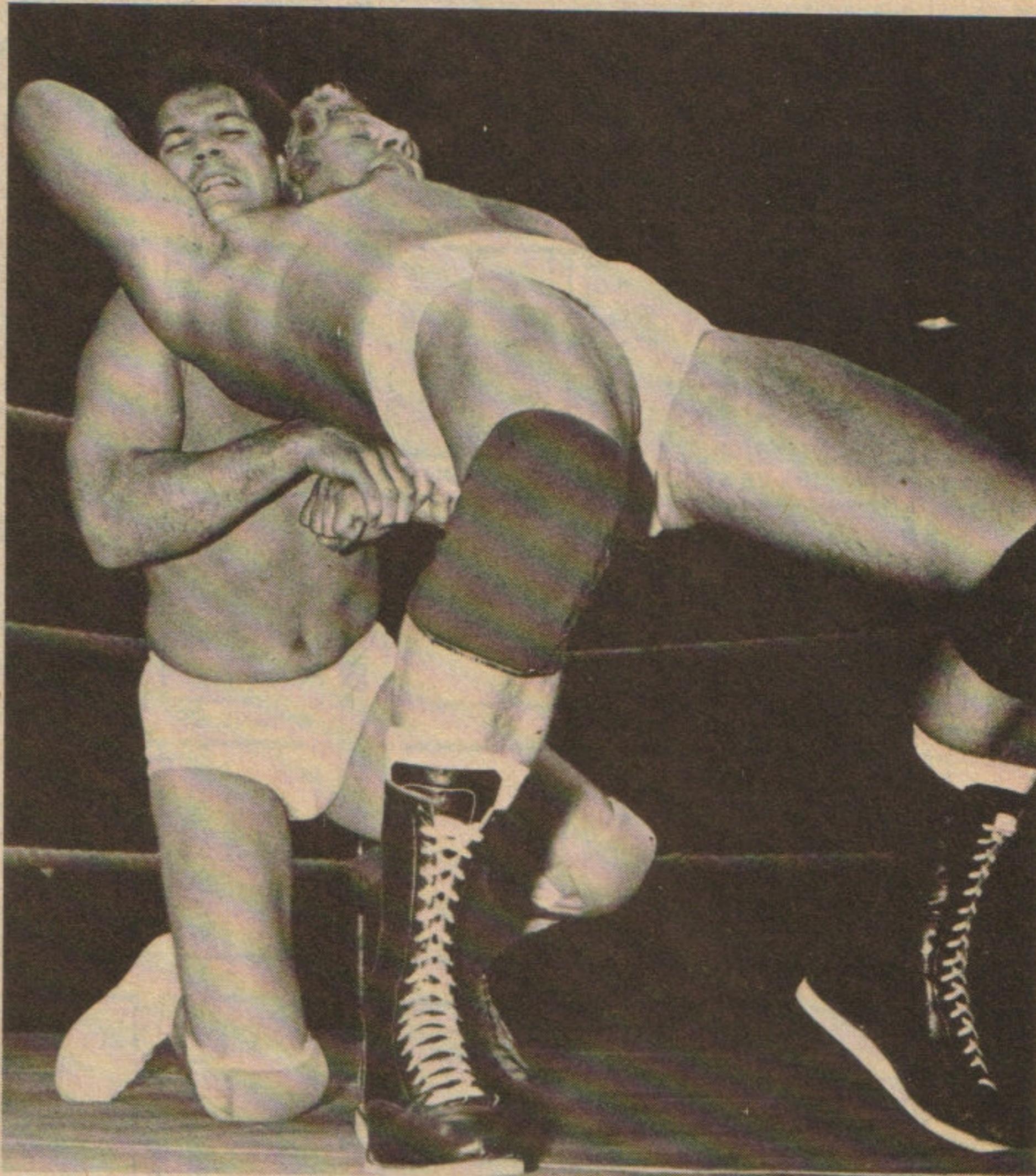
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NICK BOCKWINKEL

(Continued from Page 31)



Bockwinkel demonstrates his wrestling skills by bridging from the mat against Gagne. Greg is a top AWA contender. A conspiracy may be developing to deny him any further title shots against Bockwinkel.

difficult process. In the absence of direct proof that Bockwinkel *really* wrote the letter (though we know he did), the rulebreakers are under no obligation to schedule matches against Greg Gagne.

What started all this was a non-title match originally scheduled between Bockwinkel and Jim Brunzell. When Brunzell couldn't make the match, Gagne took his place.

"I'll never turn down a match with Bockwinkel," Greg said smilingly.

Gagne soundly thrashed Bockwinkel. Unlike most of his

title bouts, Bockwinkel wasn't disqualified. And Gagne won convincingly.

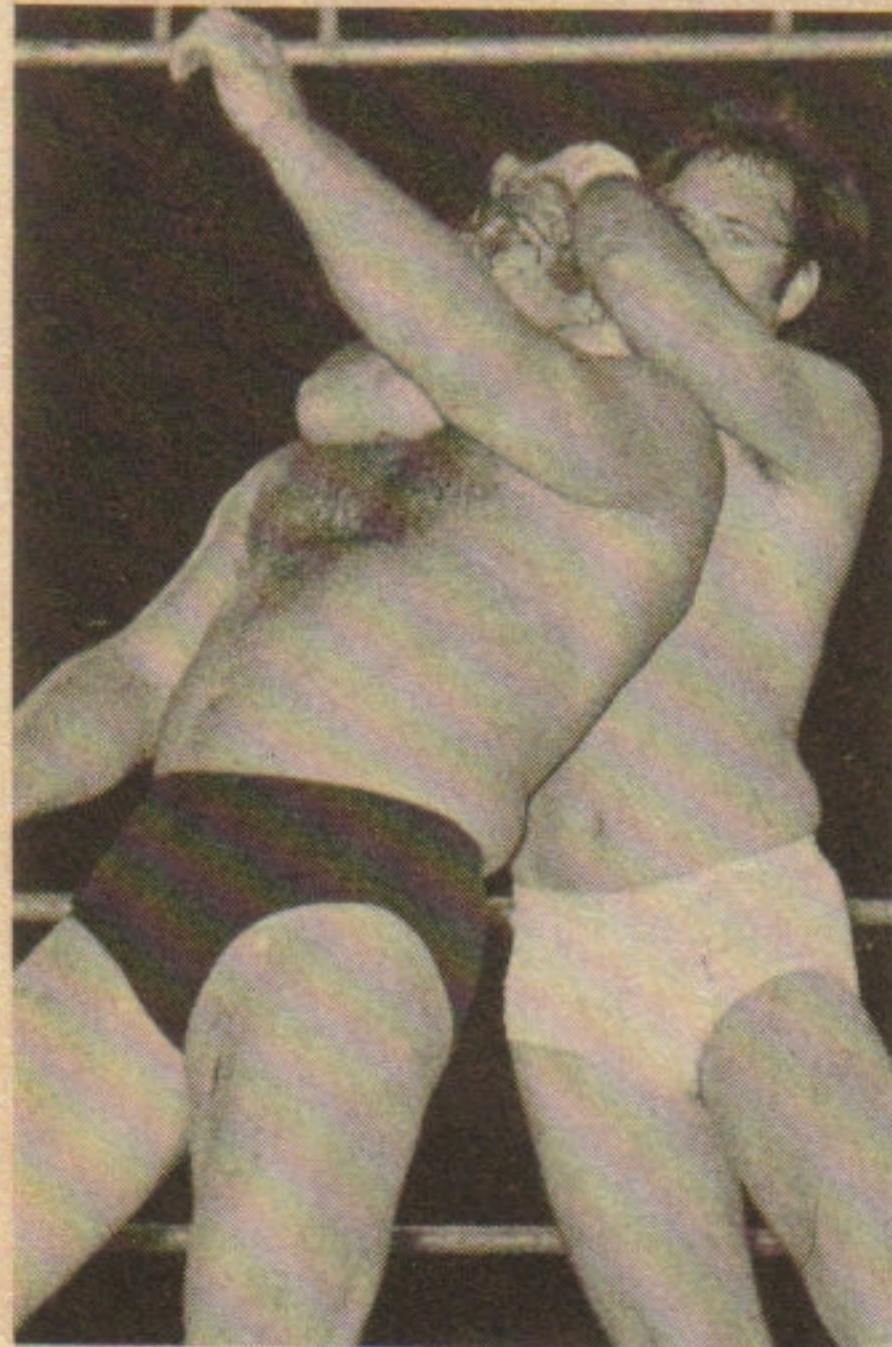
"Sure, he actually wrestled," Gagne said with barely concealed contempt. "When he really wrestles, he hasn't got a snowball's chance in hell to win. He knows that. Why else would he get himself disqualified time after time?"

Bockwinkel's first priority is the title. He will do nothing to jeopardize it. Though he would never admit it.

"Hey, I'm willing to wrestle the punk," Bockwinkel said. "You see me running away

when I found out he would be replacing that other punk? Hell, no. I wrestled the bum and he cheated, as usual. No call by the blind ref, as usual, and I lost.

"My record speaks for itself. I don't know where you got the phony letter from or what your game is, but until Gagne manages to cheat enough victories, he isn't the top contender and he doesn't merit a title shot," Bockwinkel said.



Gagne is in complete control as he applies a sleeper hold. Can Greg defeat Bockwinkel and win the AWA title?

But Gagne can't climb the ladder until he finds some way to beat this "conspiracy." Enter father.

"I have a few tricks up my sleeve," Verne Gagne said. "I've dealt with vermin like Bockwinkel and I know what kind of disinfectant to use. I've never helped Greg unless I was sure he was getting a raw deal."

"Greg wants to win the title on his own and I respect that. All I'll do is make sure he has a fair chance."

Look out, AWA rule-breakers. Verne Gagne is on the warpath. □

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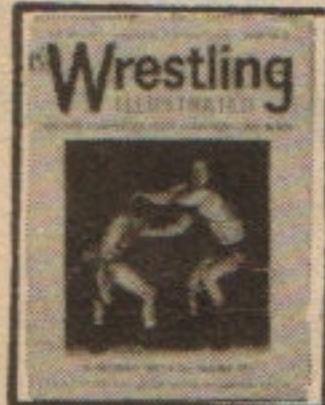
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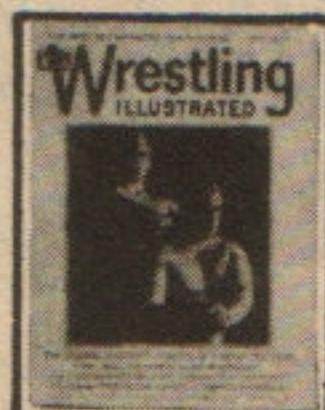
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DIBIASE VS. MURDOCH

(Continued from Page 33)

everything in working order. At least he would face Murdoch in the best possible condition.

He showered quickly. He was hungry and wanted breakfast. This would be the big meal of the day. At around four, he'd have a light supper. By match time, he'd be just a little bit hungry. That is the way he wrestled best.

About five miles away, in another motel, Dick Murdoch made himself a cup of instant coffee. Even though it was harsh, Murdoch drank it black. He didn't notice the taste. His mind was on the match that evening.

Despite his public mask of confidence, Murdoch was worried. He had little to gain and too much to lose. If he beat DiBiase, people would say the kid wasn't ready. If he lost, people would laugh at Murdoch. They wouldn't realize how tough these young kids are.

Murdoch wanted no part of DiBiase. But the promoters didn't give him a choice. Murdoch took a final swig of coffee and crushed the cup. He hurled it at a wastebasket and missed. Was that an omen for the evening? He wondered.

The day passed slowly for both men. Each took a short workout to loosen up. Both tried to study their strategy notebooks but neither could concentrate. They daydreamed about winning. Neither could contemplate the consequences of a loss.

DiBiase arrived at the arena early. For a time, he wandered

around, finding ease in the building's spacious solitude. He needed the quiet. In a couple of hours, fans would be shouting loud enough to make the building tremble. Would they be cheering him to victory? Would there be cries of pity as he took a beating? Or would there be shouts of anger as he betrayed those who had faith in him?



The determination is evident on the face of Ted DiBiase as he struggles with Dick Murdoch. Their match was splendid.

Failure lurks just behind the shoulder of every professional athlete. DiBiase felt a chill on the back of his neck. Every empty arena is drafty.

Murdoch restrained himself from coming to the arena until 30 minutes before the match. He dressed quickly but carefully. He felt ready. And he was ready.

The two men entered the arena. Neither betrayed his tension. They climbed through the ropes and stood

tall in opposing corners. The introductions were done. The bell sounded. The match was on.

It was furious from the beginning. The men were a blur of action as they struggled for victory. In the first few minutes, it appeared as if Murdoch was gaining the advantage. Then, Ted captured Murdoch in a superb armlock, gaining control of the match. DiBiase followed this hold with a series of superb maneuvers, each more brilliantly executed than the last. It was a genuine exhibition of wrestling virtuosity.

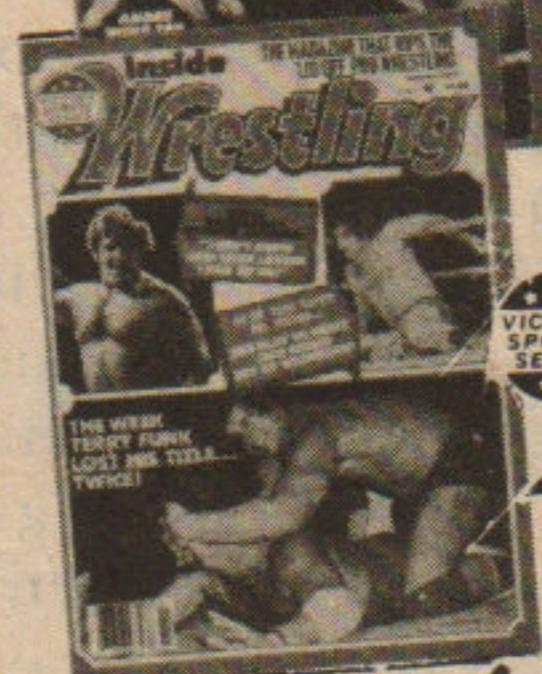
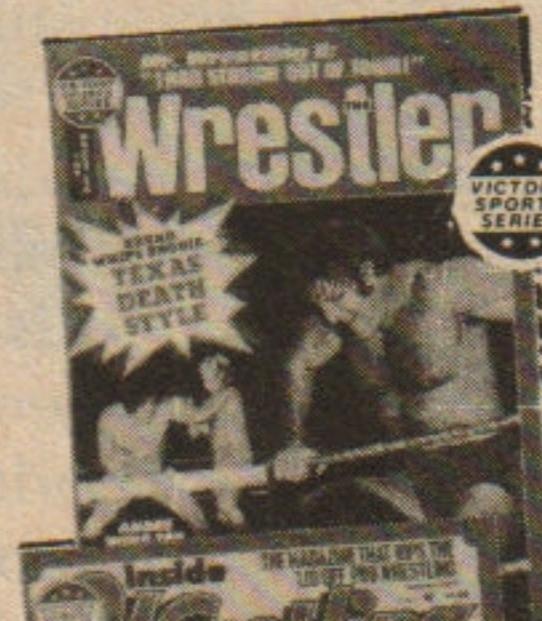
Only a veteran of Murdoch's standing could have withstood the assault. He read the strategy perfectly and countered it with almost uncanny skill. DiBiase beat a hasty retreat to his corner. One could see a look of admiration in the young man's eyes. He had been thwarted by a master.

The match slowed for about a minute as each man warily approached the other. They locked in the middle of the ring and struggled for supremacy. Neither could gain an edge. The youth and the veteran wrestled furiously. When the bell signalled that the time limit had expired, the crowd gave the pair a standing ovation. It was wrestling at its finest. Fittingly, it ended a draw.

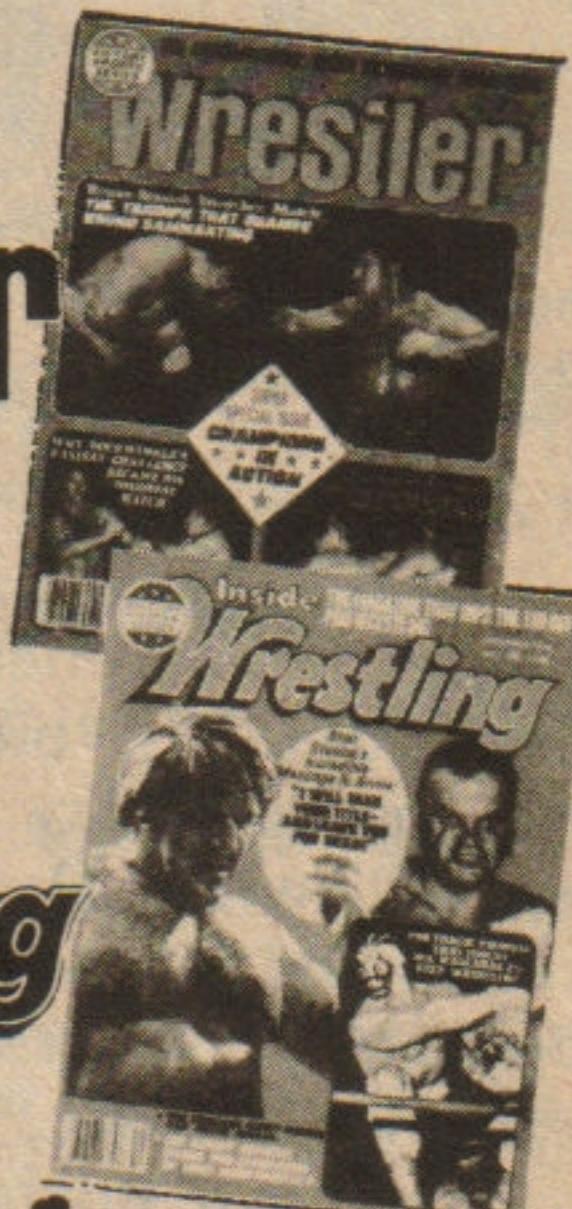
Later that night, Dick Murdoch went celebrating with friends. He does that after every great match. Ted relaxed with a few buddies. Two very different men. They share only one thing in common. Both know wrestling greatness. □

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HARLEY RACE

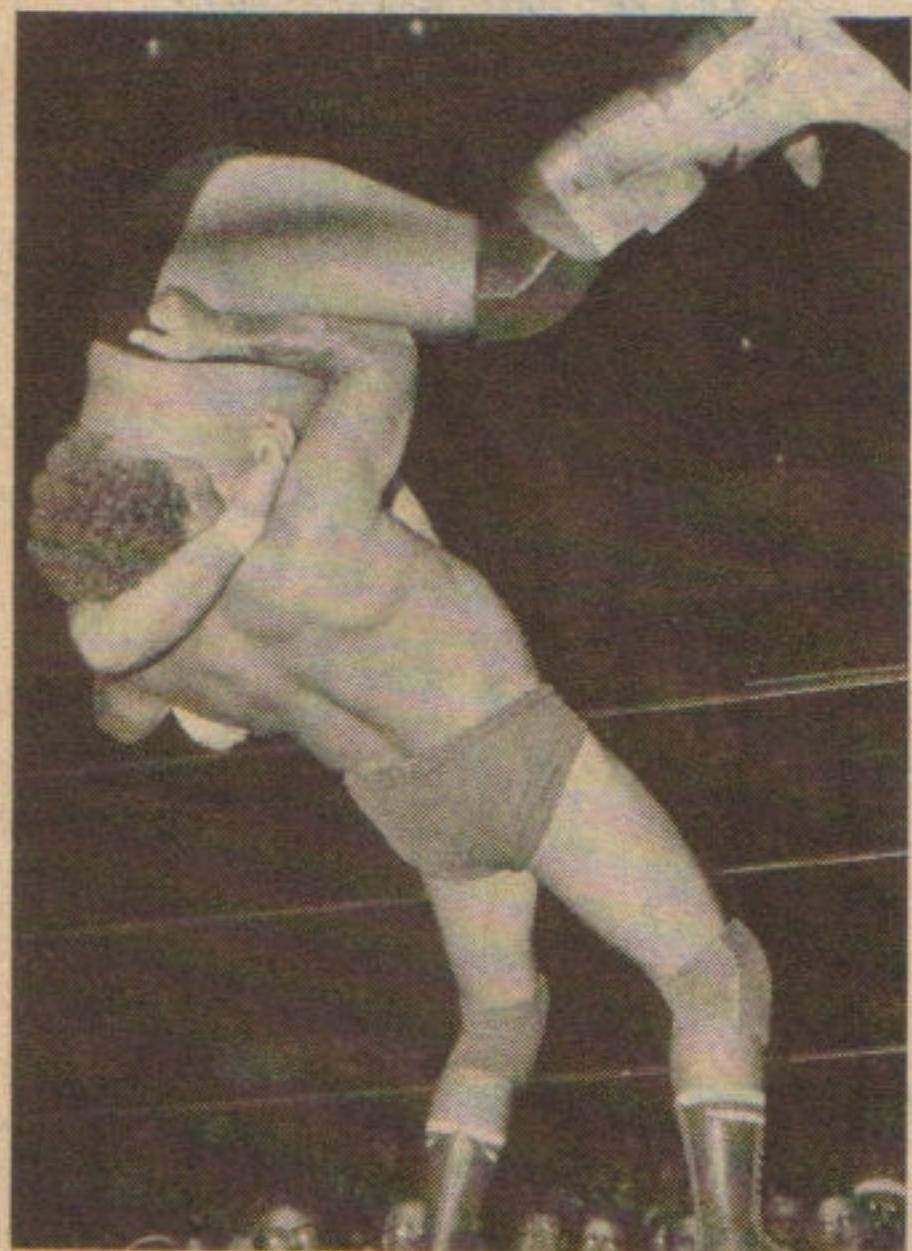
(Continued from Page 35)



Rhodes loses control as he savagely attacks a prone Race. Their feud continues.

of wrestling.

"Harley is one of the top athletes of our generation," a friend contends, "but he lacks that special ability to make people like him. Harley is the kind of guy who walks into a room and people instinctively take one step back. That's the way he likes it. But he doesn't realize a man who is always fearsome can't be loved."



Race displays his extraordinary ability by delivering a pulverizing suplex. Rhodes remains a title threat.

People can approach Dusty Rhodes. That's why they love him.

"Let's get something straight. The last thing in the world Harley wants is to be loved by wrestling fans. He just doesn't like Rhodes taking any of his glory."

Staring at his reflection in the mirror, Race's attention focused on the championship belt. It was elaborate, stunning, a symbol of the best. Only a few special men had shared this honor. Dusty Rhodes wasn't among them. Race was certain Rhodes would never have that honor.

Race took a deep breath. There were only minutes to go before his next match with Dusty Rhodes. He will give Rhodes a title match any time, any place, any how. As long as Rhodes continues to leave the ring without the title, Race is happy.

The call came for Race to come to the ring. Harley checked the belt once again, making sure he looked like a champion. He was pleased with what he saw.

The crowd cheered respectfully, but many booed when Race entered the arena. Rhodes strutted around the ring, commanding the crowd's attention. Once again, it was the challenger who stole the spotlight. Race stepped through the ropes as Rhodes led the crowd in a cheer.

As always, it was a magnificent battle. Dusty is not only a charismatic figure, he is also a superb athlete. His

strategies were brilliant, his maneuvers were perfect, and his strength was devastating. Against most opponents, it would have been a slaughter. But Race repelled Rhodes at every turn. The crowd cheered for Rhodes, but held their breath at Race's greatness.

The two men grew more desperate to prove their superiority. Rules and regulations were forgotten as the war progressed. The referee warned both men continually. Continually, he was ignored.

The ring could not contain this savagery. The pair spilled over the ropes and kept on battering away. The referee, relieved that the end was in sight, counted both men out and declared a double disqualification. The match was over. Harley Race remained the NWA champion.

As Dusty Rhodes left the arena, some fans cried in sorrow. They had come from as far away as 150 miles to see what they hoped would be the crowning of their hero as champion. Instead, they had seen a great match. But their dreams were crushed.

"Serves 'em right!" Race sneered as he strode down the aisle. "Love a loser and lose with him." Yet, Race knew he would sacrifice almost anything to have the fans cheer for him. And boo Dusty Rhodes.

Harley Race may become one of the all-time great champions. Future fans may stare in awe at his accomplishments. The record book will sing his praises. Still, his glory will be overshadowed forever by the fabulous era of Dusty Rhodes. □

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

(Continued from Page 37)

and see what there really is to him.

Old provolone. Hah, that's a good one.

The man got no guts. Let's go in order, here. How many times you seen the coward run away and hide when a superior opponent showed up. A lot. Why? Because everyone is superior to calzone-mouth, that's why.

get around it.

Brings me to the big meatball's mind. Or lack of one. Ever see Bromo try to think? His ugly nose curls up. His dim little eyes narrow and he scratches his head. Then he'll say, "Doggone it." That's it! It'll take him another half hour to come up with a few more words.

So what have we got so far? A man with no guts, no muscle,

the man has two holds he calls his own. The bearhug. The key weapon is terror. If you were in a dark alley and Bruno Sammartino grabbed you, wouldn't you go weak and faint? I would.

His bearhug is one of the funniest holds I've ever seen. Can't remember anyone losing to him with that hold.

Next is the backbreaker. What a joke. You need strength to deliver this one. I got strength. My boys, the Valiants, have strength. Three-day old linguini has more strength than stub-nose Broomface Smartini.

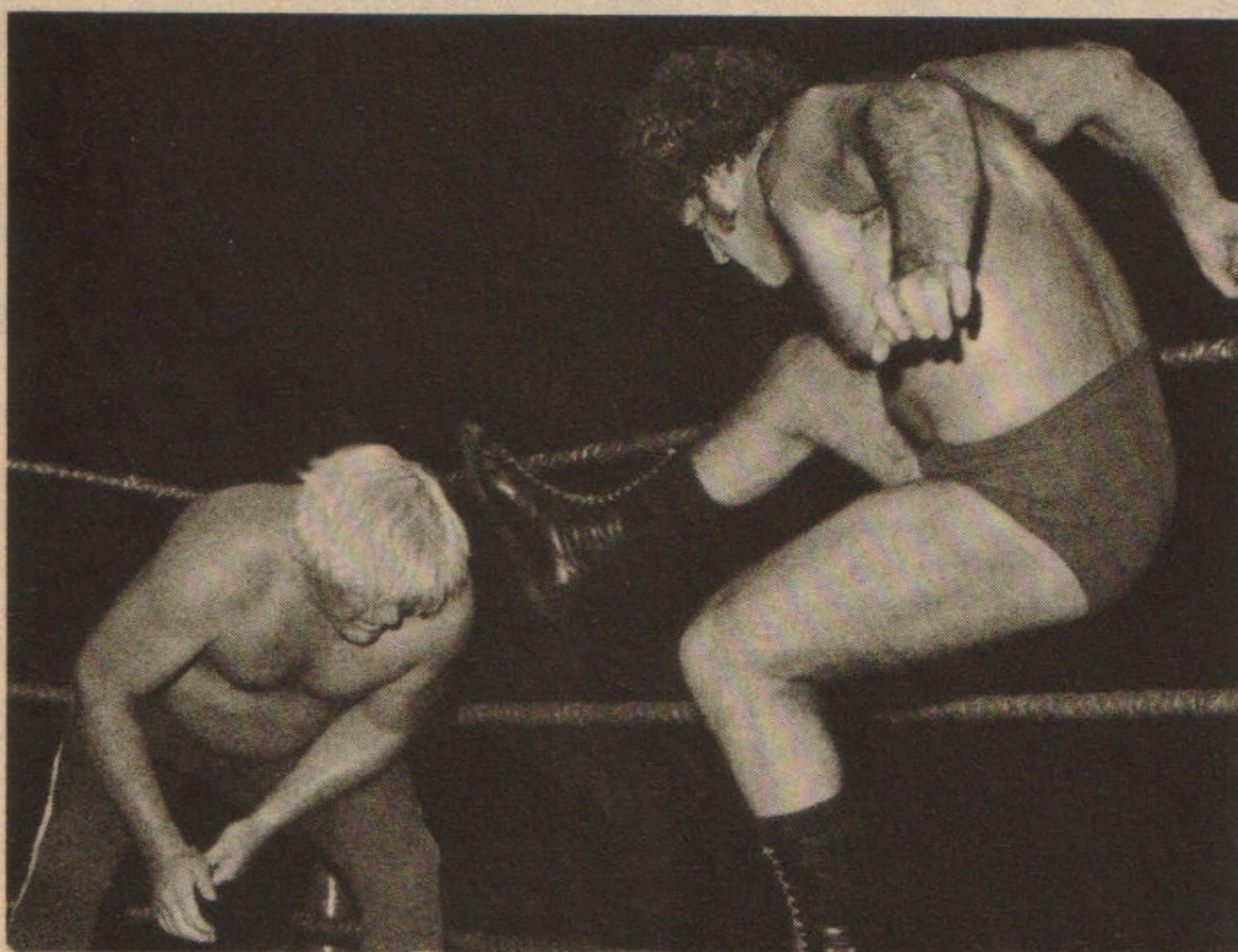
So how does Bruno do it? Luck! And one important ingredient. This is a shocker.

Bruno Sammartino breaks the rules! Yup. He brings foreign objects into the ring and slashes foes with 'em. He's tried it on the Valiants. He did it to Koloff. He's done it to everyone he's ever wrestled.

Course, Bromo isn't bright enough to know what to do. If it was up to him, he'd bring a machete into the ring. Someone has to tell the man what to do. Naturally, it's Arnold Skoaland. Arnold worked among primitive pygmy tribes for many years. He is able to communicate with backward people. That's how he communicates with Sammartino.

When you add up the life and times of Bruno Sammartino, what have you got? A has-been, a washed-up bum, a noodle who couldn't whip Peter Pan.

I enjoyed every minute of this story. You're all welcome. □



Again, Sammartino is caught breaking the rules. Poor Jerry Valiant was desperately trying to wrestle fairly. And what does Bruno do? He kicks Jerry in the head! Lasagna face has no talent. Thus he is forced to resort to treacherous tactics. I know one thing. I would never manage him.

So the man has no guts, though he has a belly. Wow, he must like that baked ziti. Since we're talking about Dummo's gut, let's move on to his speed. What speed? Good question! The man moves like a rhino with bunions. Looks like one, too, but that's getting ahead of ourselves.

The man looks so bad, he wants to hide. But he can't run. No speed. Another man would compensate and find a way to

but a fat belly. A man with no speed. A man with no mind. I'm not done.

Let's talk about talent. Somehow, the man won the WWF title. Of course, he had to cheat to win it. Ah, what happened when Superstar Graham got a hold of the Italian Scallion?

Kiss the belt goodbye, lard face.

Lasagna breath has two holds. Holds? Hah. Anyway,

MASKED SUPERSTAR

(Continued from Page 45)

How to regain the hate.

He won't speak to me. He loathes me. Don't know why. A dame. A bottle. A match. Maybe none of them or a little bit of everything. For whatever reason, Superstar will have nothing to do with me.

He threw me out of the locker. Refused to answer my calls. I had no choice. I had to dig and probe. Had to find the truth. Only because I care.

I followed Masked Superstar. He didn't go into any restaurants. Nor bars. Nor supermarkets. Only a stucco house with a sign in the window. Dr. Ron Balchunas. A psychiatrist. A shrink. I waited more than an hour. Then I saw the masked man trot down the steps. His shoulders sagged. His legs dragged. His head was bent.

Masked Superstar struggles to free himself from the tight grip of Wahoo McDaniel (above). A furious McDaniel tries to drag a hesitant Superstar outside the ring (below). The Georgia belt meant everything to the masked man.

I consulted the address and realized I knew the nurse. Dated her a couple of times a few years back. Nothing ever came of it. I knew I could get a favor from her. Knew she'd at least hint what was happening.

I called her on the phone. Shot the breeze about old times. Some good. Some bad. She suggested I come over for a nightcap. I hesitated, explained

the story, told her I had to get the truth, maybe some other time. She understood. A nice kid.

She told me Superstar had been seeing the shrink for three months. She couldn't go into details. I understood. I told her I'd see her around.

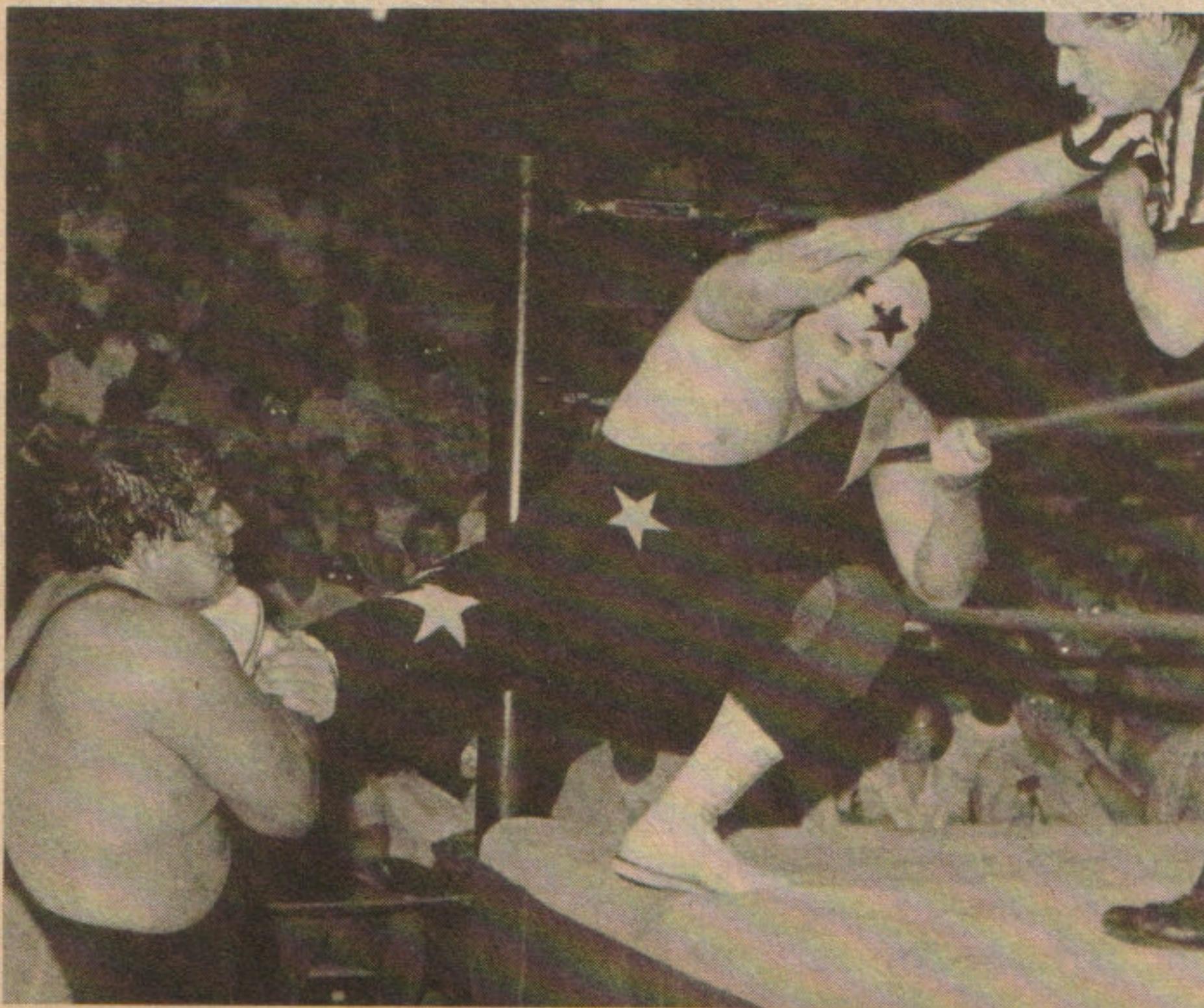
Superstar was having a problem. I called him. He said nothing. I asked about the shrink. He hung up. I needed more. I had to have something. The final proof came in a little package. Kid about nine. Freckles, sandy-colored hair. You know the type.

Kid said he was hanging outside the arena, near the wrestlers' exit. Waiting for autographs. Eager kid. Everyone came out except Masked Superstar. Little kid wanted the mysterious guy's John Hancock. You know how little kids are about autographs.

The metal door opened. Superstar rattled behind. The little kid with the freckles and sandy-colored hair asked for an autograph. Superstar stopped, silent, unmoving. The kid asked again. Superstar said nothing. Moist eyes glistened off the single, naked bulb over the entrance. Not the kid's. Masked Superstar's. He brushed past the freckles and hair, past the autograph book and into the dark.

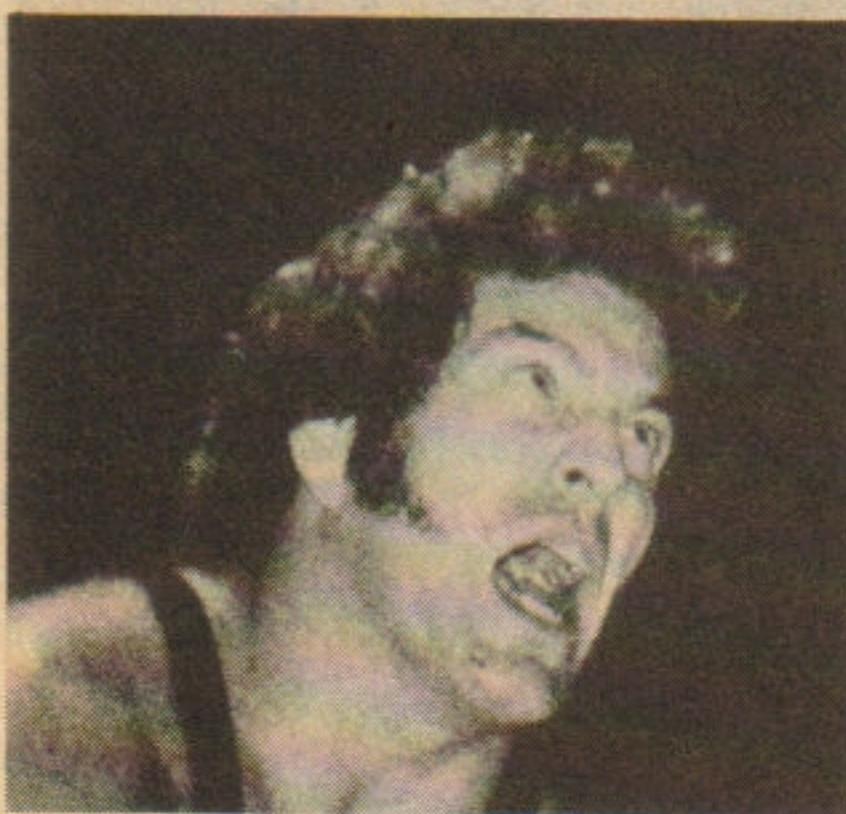
The little kid watched Masked Superstar disappear down an alley. Darkness swallowed the huge figure. Pain had already digested his dreams.

Masked Superstar. A troubled man. My name is Matt Brock. It was a helluva story. □



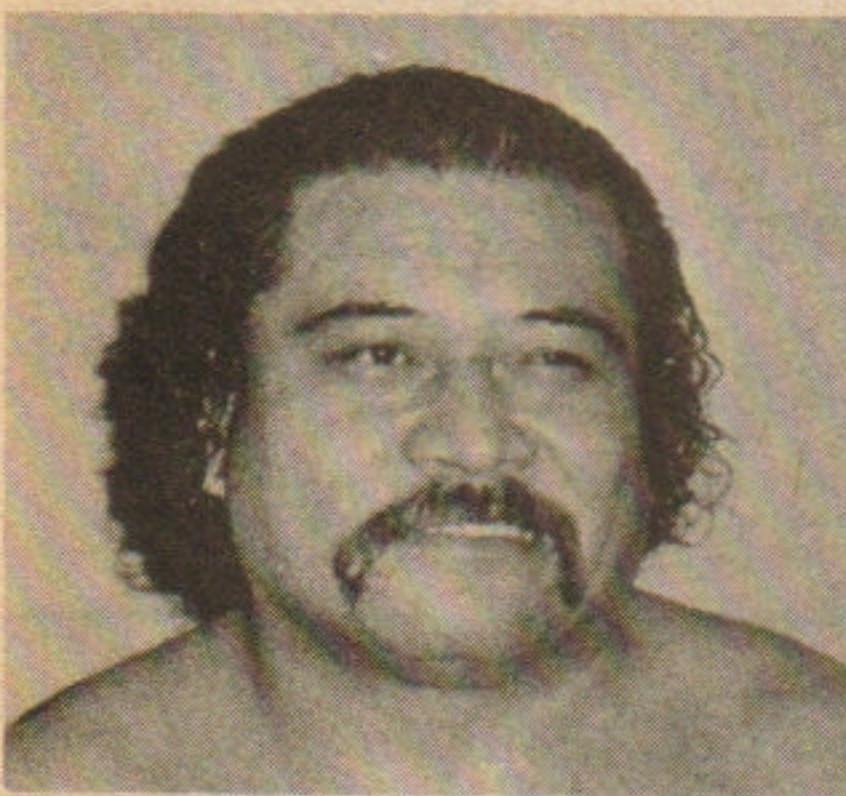
WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

(Continued from Page 43)



KEN PATERA

"The genius of my plan even stunned me, and I know how brilliant I am. I was sitting there one day, pondering what and who to overwhelm, when it hit me. I know how I can rule wrestling. I see it before me. It will take a few months at most, but I will do it."



PETER MAIVIA

"Everyone misunderstands what happened between me and Backlund. Everyone thinks I was the bad guy. No. Bobby is the one who ripped me off and stepped on me. I did what anyone would have done. My moment for total revenge is drawing near. Soon it will be over for Mr. Bob Backlund."



GREG GAGNE

"Yeah, it gets discouraging. I work myself ragged in a gym, practicing maneuver after maneuver until I can barely walk. Then I see a guy like Nick Bockwinkel get himself disqualified. I know he can do nothing except cheat. It hurts me. I think it's terrible. And frustrating."



MR. WRESTLING II

"Some nights I'll come to the arena and feel down. Just a down mood. I'll mechanically put on my mask and lace up my boots and go into the ring. As soon as I hear the fans shouting my name, I feel like three million bucks. My fans make me or break me."



STAR KID

MIL MASCARAS